THE QUESTION

Truly ſtated and calmly conſidered,

WHETHER OR NO,

There be any juſt Reaſons for a new Tranſlation of the BIBLE, or a Review of our LITURGY, ARTICLES and CANONS?

Dedicated to the *Clergy* of the CHURCHES of *England* and *Ireland*.

With REMARKS on a Pamphlet, entitled, *Free and Impartial Conſiderations upon the Candid Diſquiſitions*, &c. in a Letter to the Author.

By a GENTLEMAN.

"Examine fairly, judge rationally, and determine "impartially, like good Men, Chriſtian Divines, "and Lovers of Truth." *Dedicat.* p. 25.

LONDON:
Printed for R. GRIFFITHS, at the *Dunciad*, in St. *Paul's Church-Yard*. 1751.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

CLERGY of the CHURCHES of *England* and *Ireland*.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE no intention by this plain addreſs, to ſooth and flatter, nor yet to abuſe and revile you. I hope nothing but truth and reaſon will fall from my pen: I highly reverence your public character, and eſteem your perſons, for the ſake of your miniſtry: I am very ſenſible you are an order of men, appointed for ends and purpoſes the moſt excellent. Indeed your holy functions require the greateſt ſerioufneſs and ſanctity of life, the utmoſt wiſdom and diligence, honeſty and ſincerity, rightly to diſcharge it.

This truſt of yours, ſays an eminent prelate, " is of the higheſt nature; and God does look for care, exactneſs and circumſpection in the execution of it, ſuitable to the dignity thereof. For as nothing can be ſo fatal to men, as to neglect or miſlead them, from the right way to heaven; ſo they muſt expect to periſh themſelves, who are the cauſe of other men's deſtruction. It is the indiſpenſable duty of the ſeers and guides, whom the lord has placed as watchmen over his church, to inſtruct, admoniſh, reprove, direct and comfort, as there ſhall be occaſion, the ſeveral members of it. In the performance of this moſt weighty employment, great ſincerity is required when we engage in our paſtoral office; both what we ſay, and what we do, ſhould proceed from our hearts in truth and ſimplicity;*

* Biſhop *Moor's* ſermon, vol. 2. p. 187.

city; we should set nothing before our eyes, but the honour and glory of God, and the safety and happiness of men; and where the intentions are sincere, and all secular sinister designs separated from the performance, we may be secure of plain and faithful dealing; nothing false, nothing hurtful, nothing needless or superfluous, *will be imposed, nor any thing* necessary for the good of the soul omitted."

And whose patronage should I crave, or to whom apply for protection and countenance to this little essay, which is professedly written in favour of religious truths, and for the greater purity of divine worship in our church, than to you the seers and guides of it. But it would ill become me, on so solemn an occasion, to offer any thing unworthy of your consideration and regard; this I have not only studiously avoided, but also endeavoured to confirm the expediency and reasonableness of what is here recommended, by the authorities of some of the most eminent bishops and divines of our church, who were ornaments of it, and adorned their high stations, by a wise conduct, and a truly religious life; and a due regard ought to be had to authorities, when reason and truth are also on their side. I therefore hope to secure this little tract under the shelter of these great men, and my own good intention, from all severe censure and reflection; which is too often, but very unjustly, the hard lot of many who have no other views, than to do their share of service, to the cause of truth and religion. Indeed, men of goodness and real piety, whose zeal is rational and prudent, as well as pious, are of another temper, and act a more noble, christian, and charitable part; from such, I may expect a treatment suitable to the sincerity of my intentions, though we may possibly differ in

som

ſome particulars. And if others think it wiſe to uſe me otherwiſe, I will endeavour to behave under it, as becomes a chriſtian.

I often reflect with inward grief, on the amazing licentiouſneſs of ſome men, in their bitter ſarcaſms and invectives againſt your perſons and character; nay ſometimes the higheſt order in our church cannot be exempted from, nor eſcape their indiſcreet and unprovoked reproaches. This method of writing, very ill becomes any layman, but is certainly moſt odious and unjuſtifiable in thoſe, who profeſs themſelves miniſters of the meek and humble Jeſus, who reviled none himſelf, and patiently bore it from others. — A ſilent contempt may be the beſt way of anſwering ſuch miſtaken zealots.

But, gentlemen, permit me to aſk, whether you ought not to join the innocency of the dove, with the wiſdom of the ſerpent, in order to fruſtrate the deſigns of miſtaken men? There is no breaking of flint upon a ſtone, but ſtrike it on a ſoft pillow, and it will fly into many pieces. Remove the cauſe, and complaints it may be hoped will ſoon ceaſe.—If thoſe texts of ſcripture which now ſeem inconſiſtent with one another, were truly tranſlated, and reconciled to each other; would not this diſarm the deiſt of his moſt material arguments againſt the authority or inconſiſtency of ſcripture? If thoſe expreſſions in our liturgy, which ſeem to countenance the belief of the real preſence, or tranſubſtantiation, of auricular confeſſion and abſolution, or any other errors of the Romiſh *church, were exchanged for ſuch as are more agreeable to truth and ſcripture; might not this be the beſt method to acquit our church from retaining ſuch notions, as the papiſts falſely charge us with? If ſome of the prayers in the liturgy were altered, and ſuch*

other

other necessary improvements made therein, as are recommended in the following sheets; might not this be a more rational means to convince dissenters, than any disputes to justify and vindicate, what either may, or may not admit of a reasonable defence? Besides, to alter what is really amiss, will be for the honour and reputation of our established church, whose foundation ought to be as near as possible to perfection on many accounts; more especially, as she requires conformity to her rules, and exacts a compliance with the terms of her communion under certain penalties; so that the scheme for improving our liturgy and ecclesiastical constitution, is very consonant and agreeable both to reason and common sense, and is the best method that can be taken, to refute the adversary.

Let us but act upon the same principle of due care and respect towards religion, as we do in things of a temporal concern, and we need not desire more in favour of the present application. When evils or abuses happen in the state, both the heads and hearts of our civil governors are immediately employed, to offer proper methods for their being redressed; what pains will be taken, what difficulties encountered, what contrivances, applications, and attendancies made, in order to gain the favourite point, and nothing omitted that can tend to accomplish the design? How frequently do we amend our acts of parliament? And was our civil constitution ever thought to be endangered by such proceedings? And if so much care be taken to remove all grievances and abuses in the state, ought not our spiritual governors to be equally sedulous in having whatever is amiss, in the worship, or discipline of the church altered and corrected? For why should we not act the same rational part, with respect to the concerns of religion, as we do

in

in civil affairs? Is religion of less moment and importance to us, than that of the state?

When a book in any part of knowledge is published, the utmost care is taken to have the subject matter expressed in words clear and pertinent, and the whole performance to be as exact as possible. If any error or mistake escapes observation; how will all honest enquirers after truth be thankful to that person, who endeavours to convince him thereof. And in all subsequent editions, with what solicitous care is every slip or mistake altered and amended, that it may still appear more perfect and compleat? And what good reason can be assigned, why there should not be the same, or greater care taken, as to what relates to the truths of religion, and the parts of religious worship? Are we to permit mistakes in the translation of our bible, in the offices of our church, to remain without correction and amendment, only because it concerns matters of religion? Should we enjoin our liturgy and articles to be subscribed in the most solemn manner, when it may be truly said, that some of the most learned and best men of our church, with great ingenuity admit, that many particulars in both require alteration and amendment; not only in regard to the change of language, which is very material, but also with respect to the articles of religion, many of which are not now received in the same sense, as when first composed?

Will the obliging people to comply with what seems at least doubtful, if not much worse, tend to make them sincere in their devotion? For can I with truth confess to God that there is no health in me; *when the fact is quite the reverse? How few are there, that can with sincerity say, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." And yet this manifest* something

thing *is expressed by all in our daily evening service. How can we in the commination declare, that we wish the antient discipline of the church was restored, and yet use no endeavours towards it? Or in the same office, how few are there, if any, who can truly say,* "be favourable, O Lord, to thy people, who turn to thee, in *weeping*, fasting, and praying?" *Or can papists really believe us sincere, in denying* transubstantiation, *and* the real presence, *when we instruct our children in the catechism, that the* body and blood of Christ, are verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper; *and use this expression in the communion*; grant us, so to eat the flesh of thy dear son, and to drink his blood, *&c. or will they be convinced, that we reject their doctrine of absolution, so long as these words are in our liturgy,* I absolve thee from all thy sins? *I have myself conversed with priests who insisted that these expressions were entirely in favour of their doctrines. With as little sincerity can several expressions in the offices of confirmation, of baptism and burial, be said by any one*. To refer us to a meaning different from, and contrary to what we offer up to almighty God on such occasions, is not to the purpose: For we may as well use another language, as to say one thing with our lips, and mean another in our minds. These particulars can never be right, nor admit of any rational vindication. Therefore do not scripture, reason and common-sense; do not truth and christian sincerity, in the use of these our most solemn offices of devotion, all respectively plead for an alteration in such things? and will you suffer small and trifling objections, of no weight and importance, to take place,*

* See an excellent letter of a clergyman at the end of the expediency.

place, in opposing all just and reasonable amendments, to the great reproach of Christianity by our infidels and deists? It may be expected not. And I hope what is offered in the ensuing epitome, will be sufficient to convince those who are of your flock, or within your power of persuasion, that to have our liturgy, articles and canons revised and altered is a thing highly necessary and expedient, and this not only as a private opinion of my own, but as being also the declared sentiments of many of our most eminent bishops and divines, and which if also enforced by your farther recommendation, then might we expect to see soon accomplished, what has been long and earnestly wished for. For surely, the judgment of so many eminent divines in favour of a more perfect reformation, in our liturgy and ecclesiastical constitution, ought not in reason to be disregarded, slighted and rejected; unless we are to pay more deference and attention, to some injudicious, mistaken, if not ill designing zealots, than to the bishops of our church, who have withstood popery and presbytery; who were the ornaments of it when living, and whose pious memory will be esteemed and venerated by all good men, to the latest posterity.

You will not then let prejudice, or private sinister views prevail over reason and truth, but permit matters of fact, and rational conviction, to govern your minds; you will shew yourselves christian divines, lovers of truth, sincere and consistent protestants; act but this part, and then we may expect true religion to encrease, the church of England *to flourish, and become glorious throughout the earth. Then will deism, infidelity, and its inseparable companions popery and immorality gradually lessen, and possibly in time cease to be among us. For if we do our duty, we need not fear, but*

God will confer a blessing on our prudent endeavours.

And if ever we would have true religion flourish, and encrease in our land; if we would have deïsm, impiety, and popery to be rooted out, it must chiefly be done, by having a true translation of the bible, and our religious worship as pure and perfect as possible; our articles of religion clear and certain, few in number, and consonant to scripture. For when once our translation is rendered more agreeable to the original, when our articles of religion do more correspond with the scriptures, as being now better understood by the help of learned men; not containing any disputable points, and only such to be subscribed, as are necessary to salvation; that our canons are made more suitable to the present times, our public offices of divine worship rendered more uniform and rational, more serious and devout; when these particulars are once done, what an alteration may we not reasonably expect under God, both in the thoughts, the actions, and manners of men amongst us?

And may we not upon good grounds, wish and expect, that you, gentlemen, whose immediate province it is, will exert your zeal and influence, in favour of a design, that is in itself so excellent and praise-worthy; a design that may have a great tendency to make our deists become believers, and our papists to turn protestants. This may be a method much sooner to convince them of their errors, than if all our bishops and divines were to write against them. But should it not effect this, yet it will fully convince all men, that you have christianity and the prosperity of the church of England, *truly at heart; and that you used your best endeavours to promote the interest of both; and what a blessed omen would this be to the peace and felicity of this*

church

church and nation; would you join heartily in promoting a ſcheme, that will ſo highly conduce to God's honour and glory, and the ſincere practice of true religion.

Your application to your reſpective dioceſans, would have great weight to inſure their intereſts with the civil power, to countenance and perfect ſo excellent an undertaking, and I hope you will there meet with an eaſy acceſs, and ſufficient encouragement to proceed in ſo important an affair. Your perſonal influence with thoſe under your charge and care, will contribute greatly to remove ſuch prejudices, as ſome unhappy minds may poſſibly conceive againſt it, if your own inclinations will but lead you to engage therein; on that *depends* all our hopes. *For if you, gentlemen, will but heartily eſpouſe and countenance ſo truly a religious ſcheme, it may ſpeedily and with the greateſt eaſe, be carried into execution. And may the ſpirit of all wiſdom inſpire you with ſentiments ſuitable to the occaſion; with juſt notions of the great decay of true religion and virtue; of the dangerous encreaſe of popery and infidelity; and that you may proceed in an affair of ſo delicate a nature with chriſtian reſolution and fortitude, with chriſtion ſincerity, moderation and charity.*

But if I cannot perſuade you to this by reaſon and argument, ſo neither will I deſignedly offend you. It muſt be left to yourſelves, after a ſerious and impartial reflection on what has been ſuggeſted to you of late, in many uſeful treatiſes; whether you will, or will not, give countenance to a ſcheme for having ſome proper and ſeaſonable alterations made in the liturgy and conſtitution of our church? Or, will buſily oppoſe all attempts of that kind? And perhaps, ſome of you without examining or conſidering what is propoſed, and ſo

condemn it without reason, however rational and reasonable the thing may be in itself. But, gentlemen, would this be an instance of wisdom, much less of true christianity? No, this would be a conduct, that I hope in this enlightened age, will never more appear in a body of men, who are so much admired, and in general most deservedly, for their learning and abilities, as well as most nobly rewarded for their labours in the ministry, with such large and ample revenues.

An ingenious author very justly observes, "that one of the noblest uses which can be made of christian antiquities, would be to learn wisdom, and union, and moderation, from the faults, indiscretions and follies, and from the prudence, charity and piety of our predecessors; to observe carefully what was good, and what was blameable in remoter ages, and thence to reprove ourselves, as we are a christian nation, by removing the blemishes and defects, from which perhaps we are not free; and by adopting every thing commendable, which we may have neglected."*

For it should be considered, "that as soon as christian societies began, debates began, and as soon as christianity was by law established, debates grew more violent. It is not in the wit, or in the power of man, or rather it is an impossibility, to prevent diversity of opinions, since this is the unavoidable result of human imperfections and human liberty, and is not to be removed, unless we had more light, or less agency." And it is much to be lamented, that there is, "in this great infirmary, among other distempers with which poor mortals are afflicted, an intemperate zeal, or a spirit of party, which when it arises to a certain pitch, is not to be restrained by the gentle bands of reason,

* *Jortin*'s remarks, preface, p. 10, 13, 32.

reason, they are broken asunder, as a thread touched with fire."

You well know, that the clergy in the time of Henry VIII. *and* Edward VI. *complied with the alterations then made; and yet the cause or spring of their prejudices we may suppose were much greater, than can be imagined to be found in any of you. For then many essential points, both in doctrine and worship were to be altered; but what is now desired, as being much wanted, is only to improve and make more perfect a foundation, which considering the time when it was begun, must be allowed to be most excellent. Why then should not you also concur in a scheme that will be very advantageous to religion in general, and to the church of* England *in particular? Could I think any danger would ensue to the established church by what has been of late proposed, there is no one would be more against it than myself.*

It is no doubt your duty to oppose whatever attempts may be made, to alter any thing contrary to scripture, truth and reason; because, not to do this, would be really criminal in you, and very injurious to our church. But then, is it not equally incumbent on you as ministers of the same church, that you use your utmost endeavours, to have all such things as are amiss, rectified and made more agreeable to scripture, truth and reason than they now are? because this will have a natural tendency to raise the reputation of our church, to render it more glorious, more pure and perfect, and more unexceptionable to others. In all other cases of a like nature, this would be esteemed a most just argument, a very rational way of proceeding, and why not in the instance before us? For my own part, I must be so free as to confess myself at a loss, how clergymen, that have the

cause

cause of truth and religion sincerely at heart, can reconcile it to their own minds, that they are not the most forward in promoting, *instead of* opposing, *a design which so much tends to improve and strengthen the established church, and enlarge its borders. Gentlemen, let me beg of you here to pause.—Let me intreat you seriously, candidly and impartially to reflect on, to weigh and consider this.—*

And after a christian, and rational reflection, can you really and truly think any danger will ensue to our church, by your consenting to have such things altered, as have been proposed and recommended by no fewer, nor less eminent prelates and divines, than Tillotson, Wake, Sharp, Stillingfleet, Wilkins, Patrick, Burnet, Lloyd, Kidder, Fowler, Williams, Goodman, Scot, Stanhope, Prideaux, Nicholls, *and many more that might be mentioned; who have all appeared in favour of reviewing and amending our common prayer. For is it possible to suppose, that all these learned and pious divines, would conspire to ruin and destroy that church of which they were its greatest ornaments? Let but reason and common sense govern us, and it will then appear, that there can be no just and reasonable objections, against revising and altering our liturgy, in all things necessary and expedient. "I would then beg of you, not to shew yourselves unconcerned about a reformation in the church, (for that must highly reflect upon your religious character) nor yet in other respects weaken the hands of those, who may be carrying on that reformation; since this, if possible, will render that valuable character still more obnoxious;" but consider well what now is, and lately has been urged in this respect, in particular the following*

ing words made use of by bishop Wake, *at* Sacheverel's *trial.*

" *If things alterable, be altered, upon the grounds of prudence and charity, and things defective be supplied, and things abused be restored to their proper use, and things of a more ordinary composition, be revised and improved; whilst the doctrine, government, and worship of the church remain entire in all the substantial parts of them; we have all reason to believe, that this will be so far from injuring the church, that on the contrary, it will receive a very great benefit by it.*" *And it is submitted to your candid and unprejudiced judgment, as ministers of Christ's gospel, whether the particulars recommended in the ensuing tract, do not perfectly correspond with the above description? And unless the present constitution of our church, is to continue the same in all future ages, (which God forbid) what time can be more opportune for undertaking the improvement of it, than what through a kind providence, the present conjuncture affords? Permit me to add the observations of an excellent writer, in a letter to his friend, in favour of this design.*

" *I am of opinion, that the proposal which you mention, if managed with wisdom and candor, as I hope it will, may prove of considerable service to prevent the growth of* popery, *and to put some stop to the prevalence of* infidelity. *There seems to be a greater connection between these two, than is commonly imagined, and the one is setting forward the design of the other. Archbishop* Tillotson *was wisely aware of this, and bent his endeavours against both, as equally destructive of true religion.* " *He saw, says bishop* Burnet, *that* popery *was at the root of* atheism *and* impiety; *and that the design seemed to be laid, to make us*

first

first atheists, *that we might the more easily be made* papists: *and that many did not stick to own, that we could have no certainty,* even *for the christian religion, unless we believed the infallibility of what they called the church. This gave him a deep and just indignation, and it caused him to set the whole strength of his thoughts and studies, to withstand the progress that infidelity was making.*

He looked on the whole complex of popery, *as such a corruption of the whole design of christianity, that he thought it was incumbent on him to set himself against it, with the zeal and courage which became that cause, and was necessary for those times. He thought the idolatry and superstition of the church of* Rome, *did enervate true piety and morality, and that their cruelty was such a contradiction to the meekness of Christ, and to that love and charity, which he made the character and disposition of his disciples and followers, that he resolved to sacrifice every thing, except a good conscience, in a cause, for which he had resolved, if it should come to extremities, to become a sacrifice himself. Here you have the sense, the conduct, and the resolutions of one of the greatest and best of men, laid before you, and I doubt not but you will make a proper use of it, to serve the true interest of religion, and prevent the unhappy growth of what so manifestly tends to its ruin."* **Indeed, here is a noble example, in all respects worthy of your most religious zeal to imitate.*

The words of bishop Burnet, *being part of his advice to the clergy, I humbly apprehend, may not be improper on this occasion, but demand the serious and impartial attention of all those who are*

* Appeal to common reason, &c. p. 132 to 134.

are possessed with a true sense of religion, and would endeavour at the upright discharge of the duties of Christ's ministry.

" *Above all things, says the bishop, raise within yourselves a zeal for doing good, and for gaining souls. I have lamented during my whole life, that I saw so little true zeal among our clergy: I saw much of it in the clergy of the church of* Rome, *though it is both ill directed and ill conducted. I saw much zeal, likewise throughout the foreign churches; the dissenters have a great deal among them, but I must own, that the main body of our clergy has always appeared dead and lifeless to me; and instead of animating one another, they seem rather to lay one another asleep: Without a visible alteration in this, you will fall under an universal contempt, and lose both the credit and fruits of your ministry.*

" *In the matter of mysteries be very cautious; for the simplicity, in which those sublime truths are delivered in the scriptures, ought to be well studied and adhered to, only one part of the argument should be insisted upon, I mean the shortness and defectiveness of our faculties, which being well considered, will afford a great variety of noble speculations that are obvious and easily apprehended, to restrain the wanton sallies of some petulant men.*

Study to understand well the controversies of the church of Rome, *chiefly those concerning* infallibility *and* transubstantiation; *for in managing those, their missionaries have a particular address; learn to view popery in a true light, as a conspiracy to exalt the powers of the clergy, even by subjecting the most sacred truths of religion, to contrivances for raising their authority, and by offering to the world another method of being saved, besides that prescribed in the gospel. Popery is a mass of im-*

 postures,

Postures, supported by men who manage them with great advantage, and impose them with inexpressible severities, on those who dare call any thing in question, that they dictate to them. I see a spirit rising among us, too like that of the church of Rome, *of advancing the clergy beyond their due authority, to an unjust pitch. This rather heightens jealousies and prejudices against us, than advances our real authority; and it will fortify the designs of profane infidels, who desire nothing more, than to see the public ministry of the church first disgraced, and then abolished. The carrying any thing too far commonly leads men in the other extreme; we are the dispensers of the word and sacraments, and the more faithful and diligent we are in this, the world will pay so much the more respect and submission to us: And our maintaining an argument for more power than we now have, will be of no effect unless the world sees, that we make a good use of the authority that is already in our hands. It is with the clergy as with princes, the only way to keep their prerogative from being uneasy to their subjects, and from being disputed, is to manage it wholly for their good and advantage; then will all be for it, when they find it is for them. Therefore let the clergy live and labour well, and they will feel that as much authority will follow that, as they will know how to manage well."*

"*I do not enter into the scandalous practices of non-residence and pluralities, which are sheltered by so many colours of law among us; whereas the church of* Rome, *from whence we had those, and many other abuses, has freed herself from this, under which we still labour, to our great and just reproach. This is so shameful a profanation of holy things, that it ought to be treated with detes-*

tation

tation and horror: Do ſuch men think on the vows they made on their ordination, on the rules in the ſcripture, on the nature of their function, or that it is a care of ſouls. How long, how long ſhall this be the peculiar diſgrace of our church, which, for aught I know, is the only church that tolerates it? I muſt add, that I do not reckon the holding poor livings that lie contiguous, a plurality, where both are looked after, and both afford only a competent maintenance.

"*O my brethren, (for I ſpeak to you as if I was among you) think what manner of perſons you ought to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs, that ſo you may ſhine as lights in the world. Think of the account you muſt give for thoſe immortal ſouls committed to your care, which were redeemed by the blood of Chriſt, who has ſent you in his name, to perſuade them to be reconciled to God, and at laſt to preſent them to him with exceeding joy; he ſees and obſerves your labours, and will recompence them glorioſly in that great day. I leave all theſe things on your conſciences, and pray earneſtly, that God may give his bleſſing to this poſthumous labour of mine, that our* church may be ſo built up by your labours, that it may continue to be long the joy of the whole earth, in the perfection of its beauty, and may be a pattern as well as give protection to all the churches of God.*."

I will detain you no longer, only let me requeſt you to peruſe what is now laid before you, with that ſerioufneſs and ſincere regard to truth as becomes the miniſters of Chriſt; let not ſiniſter views or private intereſt tempt you to pronounce an unreaſonable, unjuſt judgment, or determination in a point, wherein the goſpel truths of your great lord and maſter are ſo nearly concerned. Let it appear

* *Burnet*'s concluſion to the hiſtory of his own times.

Postures, supported by men who manage them with great advantage, and impose them with inexpressible severities, on those who dare call any thing in question, that they dictate to them. I see a spirit rising among us, too like that of the church of Rome, *of advancing the clergy beyond their due authority, to an unjust pitch. This rather heightens jealousies and prejudices against us, than advances our real authority; and it will fortify the designs of profane infidels, who desire nothing more, than to see the public ministry of the church first disgraced, and then abolished. The carrying any thing too far commonly leads men in the other extreme; we are the dispensers of the word and sacraments, and the more faithful and diligent we are in this, the world will pay so much the more respect and submission to us: And our maintaining an argument for more power than we now have, will be of no effect unless the world sees, that we make a good use of the authority that is already in our hands. It is with the clergy as with princes, the only way to keep their prerogative from being uneasy to their subjects, and from being disputed, is to manage it wholly for their good and advantage; then will all be for it, when they find it is for them. Therefore let the clergy live and labour well, and they will feel that as much authority will follow that, as they will know how to manage well."*

"*I do not enter into the scandalous practices of non-residence and pluralities, which are sheltered by so many colours of law among us; whereas the church of* Rome, *from whence we had those, and many other abuses, has freed herself from this, under which we still labour, to our great and just reproach. This is so shameful a profanation of holy things, that it ought to be treated with detes-*

tation

tation and horror: Do ſuch men think on the vows they made on their ordination, on the rules in the ſcripture, on the nature of their function, or that it is a care of ſouls. How long, how long ſhall this be the peculiar diſgrace of our church, which, for aught I know, is the only church that tolerates it? I muſt add, that I do not reckon the holding poor livings that lie contiguous, a plurality, where both are looked after, and both afford only a competent maintenance.

"*O my brethren, (for I ſpeak to you as if I was among you) think what manner of perſons you ought to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs, that ſo you may ſhine as lights in the world. Think of the account you muſt give for thoſe immortal ſouls committed to your care, which were redeemed by the blood of Chriſt, who has ſent you in his name, to perſuade them to be reconciled to God, and at laſt to preſent them to him with exceeding joy; he ſees and obſerves your labours, and will recompence them glorioſly in that great day. I leave all theſe things on your conſciences, and pray earneſtly, that God may give his bleſſing to this poſthumous labour of mine, that our* church may be ſo built up by your labours, that it may continue to be long the joy of the whole earth, in the perfection of its beauty, and may be a pattern as well as give protection to all the churches of God.*."

I will detain you no longer, only let me requeſt you to peruſe what is now laid before you, with that ſerioſneſs and ſincere regard to truth as becomes the miniſters of Chriſt; let not ſiniſter views or private intereſt tempt you to pronounce an unreaſonable, unjuſt judgment, or determination in a point, wherein the goſpel truths of your great lord and maſter are ſo nearly concerned. Let it appear

* *Burnet*'s conclusion to the hiſtory of his own times.

appear to all men, that your minds are influenced and governed by reason, truth and godly sincerity; let not therefore prejudice and prepossession, lukewarmness or temerity, divert you from exerting yourselves, in the cause of God and religion; But let the solemn engagements which your sacred office obliged you to, at your first admission therein, be ever present to your remembrance. Suffer no motives, however alluring, so to captivate your understandings, as to make you forget the performance of those promises, you then most solemnly made, and thereby lose your integrity; and if you will thus seriously reflect on the many obligations which your divine function doth most certainly lay you under; I persuade myself, that what is here submitted to your fair and candid judgment, urged with good reason, truth and argument, and supported with some of the best authorities, will not only tend to induce you to determine in favour of the question, whether a translation of the bible, and a review of our liturgy, articles, and canons, are not things most just and reasonable in themselves, and very fit and proper to be undertaken at the present juncture of time; but also obtain your countenance, influence, and encouragement, to have the design carried into execution?

Examine fairly, judge rationally, and determine impartially, like good men, christian divines, and lovers of truth.

THE

THE

QUESTION

Truly Stated.

Fellow Christians and Protestants,

MY present design is not to deceive you, or impose upon your understandings, but to reason plainly with you in the spirit of meekness and love, on very serious and important subjects; wherein the truths of religion, and the right worship of almighty God, are most nearly concerned. All I request of you is, that you will resolve to exercise your reasonable faculties, to examine fairly and calmly what is offered, to lay aside all prejudices and prepossessions, all private views and self-interest, which may seem to obstruct a free enquiry, that so being unbiassed and impartial, you may receive truth with the greater advantage.

The points submitted to your present considerations are, whether we should have the bible, which contains the revealed will of God to man, truly translated from the original, all known errors and mistakes rectified, and such passages as are seemingly inconsistent, compared and reconciled one with the other? Or, that we must be contented with the present translation, so imperfect as it is, especially, at a time, when we may have the assistance of many learned men, some living, and by the works of others dead, whose superior advantages of studying the scriptures, in their original languages, must be sup-

poſed to know and underſtand them better, than the old tranſlators did, and conſequently are able to render a more juſt tranſlation, than was poſſible to be done, above a century paſt?—Another material concern is, whether our public forms of divine worſhip, when we approach the infinitely perfect God, the ſupreme governor of the world, ſhould not be expreſſed in language plain and eaſy; free from figurative and obſcure terms, diſputable or doubtful expreſſions, that ſo we may offer up to the almighty a conſiſtent and reaſonable ſervice, worthy of us his creatures, and fit for his acceptance, through the merits of our bleſſed lord? Or whether we muſt be confined to the uſe of a liturgy, which in the opinion of many eminent biſhops and learned divines of our church, does greatly require a review, and alterations to be made in various particulars? And as in our liturgy, ſo alſo in the thirty-nine articles of religion and canons.

Theſe are the ſubjects I would earneſtly recommend to your mature and impartial conſideration. And I hope that a new tranſlation of the bible, and a review of our liturgy, articles and canons, where needful, will appear ſo neceſſary, as well as reaſonable in itſelf, that you will not only concur with me in approving of, but alſo in endeavouring to promote ſuch excellent deſigns, by every method within your power.

The church of *England* has many adverſaries to guard and defend herſelf againſt, as a chriſtian church; the atheiſt, deiſt, and infidel, lie in wait, and are ever ready to attack her foundation, even in the eſſentials of religion. As a proteſtant church, the artful and ſedulous prieſts and emiſſaries of *Rome*, incenſed at her having recourſe to the ſcriptures, as the only rule of faith and trial

trial of doctrines, and to the exerciſe of that reaſon which God has implanted in us, on purpoſe to diſtinguiſh truth from falſhood; are ſo enraged at our reforming from, and expoſing her many idolatrous, ſuperſtitious doctrines and practices, that they inceſſantly labour to make proſelytes from our church, by corrupting her members, and ſeducing them to the church of *Rome*; and are therefore conſtantly upon the watch, either to expoſe the preſent doctrine of our church, or to prevent her reforming farther from them; well knowing that ſuch a reformation will tend to leſſen the number of papiſts, as alſo the power and influence of their prieſts. For ſo long as we retain ſome things in our liturgy, that ſeem to favour their notions of tranſubſtantiation, auricular confeſſion, abſolution of the prieſts, *&c.* they flatter themſelves, that whilſt theſe continue unaltered, they will have a tolerable chance, to impoſe upon the ignorant and unlearned, and make them think that the church of *England* believes theſe falſe and unſcriptural tenets as well as themſelves. Again,

The church of *England*, as an eſtabliſhed church, has alſo the Diſſenters of all denominations, who differ from her, to engage with; and though I believe we have no reaſon at preſent to conſider them as enemies to our church, yet it is natural to ſuppoſe, that they will endeavour to juſtify their ſeparation all they can, by obſerving ſuch errors and miſtakes, as they can diſcover in the eſtabliſhment. Under theſe circumſtances, whether we conſider the atheiſt, or the deiſt, the papiſt, or the diſſenter, it certainly behoves both the civil and ſpiritual governors of the church of *England*, to take due care, that the ſoundneſs of her faith, the truth of her doc-

trine, the excellency and perfection of her liturgy, ſhould be ſuch, as will ſtand the teſt of all oppoſers, and leave no juſt room for any to call in queſtion the leaſt part of her eſtabliſhment. Becauſe, the more exact, perfect, and conſonant to ſcripture, truth and reaſon, that is, the better qualified and entitled will *ſhe* be, to require conformity to her rules and orders as an eſtabliſhed church, and at the ſame time render leſs excuſable, thoſe who ſhall then diſſent from her.

The learned *Stillingfleet* admired * " the prudence and temper of the *French* churches, who were ſo far from inſerting any thing controverſial in their public forms, that papiſts themſelves would uſe them: and ſays, that the ſame temper was uſed by our reformers, in the compoſing our liturgy in reference to the papiſts, the only party then appearing, whom they deſired to draw into their communion, by coming as near them, as they well and ſafely could; and certainly thoſe holy men, who did ſeek by any means to draw in others at ſuch a diſtance, from their principles, as the papiſts were, did never intend by what they did, for that end, to exclude any truly tender conſciences from their communion. That which they laid as a bait for them, was never intended for a hook for thoſe of their own profeſſion. But the ſame or greater reaſon, which made them at that time yield ſo far to them, would now have perſuaded them to alter and lay aſide thoſe things which yield matter of offence, to any of the ſame profeſſion with themſelves now; for ſurely none will be ſo uncharitable towards thoſe of his own profeſſion, as not to think there is as much

* *Irenicum*, p. 122, 123.

much reaſon to yield in compliance with them, as with the Papiſts." And ſays dean *Sherlock*,

"We have reaſon to hope, that the church of *England*, which at the beginning of the reformation, took ſuch prudent care not to offend the papiſts, by going farther from them, than was neceſſary, will whenever it is likely to do good, condeſcend a great deal farther than it is neceſſary to reform, to meet the diſſenter; for while the external decency, gravity and ſolemnity of worſhip is ſecured, no wiſe and good man will think much, to change a changeable ceremony, when it will heal the breaches and diviſions of the church; and let us all heartily pray to God, that there may be this good and peaceable diſpoſition of mind in *us* all, towards a happy reunion; and all conſidering men will think it time to lay aſide little diſputes, when it is not merely the church of *England* nor any particular ſet of proteſtants, whoſe ruin is aimed at, but the whole proteſtant faith." * Though the obſervations of theſe two learned divines, ought ſeriouſly to be conſidered by all Proteſtants, as being of great weight in favour of chriſtian unity; yet my preſent deſign is ſolely with a view to advance the honour and reputation of our church, excluſive of any the leaſt concern towards proteſtant diſſenters, more than what may be conſequential to ſuch an undertaking; and which I hope can be no crime, or deemed ſo by any good chriſtian.

It may be proper previouſly to remark, before I proceed farther, that I would not be thought to intend, or aim at any alterations in our bible, liturgy, articles and canons, but what ſhall be judged

* Sermon before the Lord Mayor, in 1688. *Cogan's* Collect. of Tracts.

judged neceſſary by our biſhops and ſuch other learned divines, as may be authoriſed by his majeſty, to examine into particulars; and then for ſuch alterations to be laid before the convocation, and afterwards to receive the ſanction of king, lords, and commons; and ſurely ſuch a method as this, muſt be very ſafe for the church, and tend to inſure her protection, and enlarge her communion; nor is a procedure of this kind new, the ſame having been done many times ſince the reformation.

Dr. *Nichols* informs us, that there were no leſs than five tranſlations of the bible, in the ſpace of ſeventy-two years, and eight reviews of the common prayer, in the compaſs of an hundred and twenty-five years*. But biſhop *Nicholſon* in his apology, aſſures us, "that the common prayer had undergone the file fifteen times before 1644, when it was aboliſhed:" and one ſince in the year 1661. And was there no good reaſon to be aſſigned for another review, then the omiſſion might be well excuſed. But let us hear the ſentiments of archbiſhop *Tenniſon*. "Some who have well conſidered all the alterations and amendments made in the year 1661, which amount to the number of ſix hundred, are ſufficiently convinced, that if they had reaſons for thoſe changes then, there is equal, if not greater reaſons, for ſome farther improvements now.†"

The alterations then made were chiefly theſe; ſeveral leſſons in the calender were changed for others more proper for the days. The prayers upon particular occaſions were diſjoined from the litany. The prayer for the parliament, for all conditions of men, and the general thankſgiving, were firſt added. Several of the collects were

* *Nichols*'s Commentary.

† Diſcourſe of *Eccleſiaſt. Commiſſion*, ib. 1689.

were altered. The epiſtles and goſpels were taken out of the laſt tranſlation of the bible. The office for baptiſm of riper years, the forms of prayer at ſea, on the martyrdom of king *Charles*, and the reſtoration, were then firſt appointed." * And will any ſay, that theſe were not very neceſſary improvements of our liturgy?

And yet much opoſition was even then made, by ſome unchriſtian zealots: for Dr. *Nichols* informs us, " That by the management of ſome great perſons then in power, the minds of the epiſcopal clergy, and zealous conformiſt, were ſo wrought up, upon the talk of theſe alterations, that the biſhops who were concerned in them, found it a difficult matter to manage the temper of their friends. This was the reaſon of their apologizing for the alterations then made in their preface." Surely the thing itſelf needed no apology.

A ſerious reflection on the unreaſonableneſs and weakneſs of that oppoſition, ſhould methinks ſerve as a leſſon of caution to the preſent age, not to be guilty of the like indiſcretion. For whoever will compare the one prayer book with the other, will eaſily obſerve the great improvements that were then made in our liturgy. And can it be more dangerous to have another review in about ninety years, than to have ſixteen formerly, in the ſame courſe of time? The only fatal effects of the laſt review, were the rejecting of near two thouſand miniſters from their livings: a conſequence not then regarded, and which can no way be apprehended, from the alterations that are now propoſed. As to any difficulty in the undertaking, there is nothing of much moment and importance, but what ſuppoſes application, labour, and attention; no book can be compoſed, no grand deſign attempted without theſe; and can any ſubject,

* *Nichols*'s Commentary ibid. Note in the Preface.

jeſt, any enterprize or concern, ſo reaſonably require us to encounter with ſome difficulties, as what is here propoſed and recommended? It ſeems a duty as much incumbent on our governors to rectify what is amiſs in the concerns of the church, as it is for private perſons to reform what is ſo, in their reſpective morals; nay, ſuch corrections and amendments if prudently done, will naturally tend to promote more among us, the practice both of morality and chriſtianity.

From this conciſe account it evidently appears, that our governors civil and eccleſiaſtical, both at the time of the reformation and ſince, have judged it lawful and expedient, to make various tranſlations of the bible, as alſo many reviews of our liturgy. And from the preface to the preſent common prayer, we learn, "That the particular forms of divine worſhip, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be uſed therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and ſo acknowledged; it is but reaſonable, that upon weighty and important conſiderations, according to the various exigencies of times and occaſions, and alterations, ſuch changes ſhould be made therein, as to thoſe who are in place of authority, ſhould from time to time ſeem either neceſſary or expedient. Accordingly we find, that in the reign of ſeveral princes of bleſſed memory, ſince the reformation, the church upon juſt and weighty conſiderations, hath yielded to make ſuch alterations, in ſome particulars, as in their reſpective times, were thought convenient."

As to the neceſſity of a new tranſlation of the bible, I need only to obſerve, that the different interpretations of ſcripture, and the various renderings of learned men, in their comments and annotations, in the ſermons preached and pub-

liſhed by divines of any eminency, do all conſpire to prove and confirm this truth. A fact ſo well known, that it is needleſs to add more, unleſs to refer the ignorant or doubtful, to *Pool*'s ſynopſis, and to *Hammond*, *Patrick*, *Kidder*, *Whitby*, *Locke*, and others on the bible.

The reaſonableneſs and expediency of reviſing the common prayer, will appear, from the change of language ſince it was firſt compiled, and from the many figurative, obſcure expreſſions, that are in the preſent form; Dean *Stanhope*, a late eminent divine juſtly obſerves*, "That the very conſiderable changes which have happened to many of our modern languages, and particularly the great improvement made in the *Engliſh* tongue, within the laſt century, are a mighty prejudice, even to the moſt valuable things written before that time. No weight of argument, or beauty of thought, is ſufficient to procure them that good acceptance with the generality of readers, which they would not fail to find, if dreſſed in a more modiſh garb; and therefore the making ſuch writers ſpeak as if they had lived and converſed with us at this day, while the force and ſubſtance of what they ſay is preſerved entire, is ſo far from an injury, that I preſume it will be allowed, a kindneſs and advantage." And was the common prayer *new dreſſed* and *modernized*, it might be more agreeable to all perſons, and uſed with greater devotion; and yet the method, matter and ſubſtance thereof, ſtill remain the ſame.

The remark of our learned Dean *Prideaux* is very pertinent on the occaſion†. "The *Romaniſts* do not believe their liturgy was brought

* Preface to *Parſons*'s Chriſtian Directory.

† Connect. Part. 1, p. 128. Octavo.

them from heaven, though they ſtick to it as if it was; and if that ſtiffneſs of humour which is now among us, againſt altering any thing in our liturgy, ſhould continue, it muſt at laſt bring us to the ſame paſs; for all language being *in fluxu*, ſhould our liturgy be ſtill continued, without any change or alteration, it would at length be as much in an unknown language, as now the *Roman* ſervice is, to the vulgar of that communion." And ſays Dr. *Nichols*, "I am fully ſatisfied, that a great many of our members that have a great value for our common prayer, would have their affection to it raiſed much higher, if they underſtood the many excellencies thereof, which for a great part eſcape their knowledge; and to have a zeal without knowledge, is not ſo praiſeworthy*." He then obſerves, "That it is no reflection on the common prayer, to ſay, there are ſome things which are not ſo clear at leaſt to ordinary perſons; the very language itſelf, may be well ſuppoſed to be altered in an hundred and fifty years." And gives inſtances of ſeveral words uſed now in a different ſenſe, from what they were in *Edward* VI's reign.

And ſurely no words can be more ſtrong and convincing to prove the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of reviſing our liturgy, than theſe of Dr. *Nichols*; for if the obſcurity of the common prayer is ſuch, as to require a paraphraſe to make it intelligible, it evidently proves the neceſſity of having it reviſed. Becauſe any paraphraſe, however excellent in itſelf, cannot be uſed in public, and conſequently is of no uſe in the time of divine ſervice. Indeed all comments on the bible and common prayer naturally ſuppoſe ſome defect or obſcurity in the original of both; and

* Preface to the Octavo Edition on Common-prayer.

and either would be rendered needless, had we a translation and liturgy more exact and perfect, and the language better adapted to our times.

It is observable, that one reason given by those who made the last alterations in our liturgy was, that it was done, "for the more proper expressing of some words or phrases of ancient usage, in terms more suitable to the language of the present times, and the clearer explanation of some other words or phrases, that were either of doubtful signification, or otherwise liable to misconstruction.*" And if this was a good reason for doing it then, why not now? Why should not we have things that are amiss, or fit and necessary to be altered now, as well as they had then? The not attempting it, will afford our deists and infidels sufficient matter for reflection.

The nature of divine worship certainly requires, that almighty God should be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and with the understanding also; and therefore the liturgy and public offices of the church, should be plain and level to the capacity of the most ignorant, to the intent that every person may fully understand the meaning of such petitions, as he offers up to the author of his being, when met to pay him the homage and worship of a creature. "Forms of divine worship, says *Stillingfleet*, should be so composed, as to be the least subject to any scruple from any person whatsoever; and was a review made by wise and peaceable men, not given to wrath and disputing, it might be so far from being a dishonour to this church, that it may add to the glory of it." And bishop *Wittenhall* observes, "That the alteration of an expression, and here and there a whole prayer or two by law, or dis-

 pensing

* Preface to Common Prayer.

penſing with ſome ceremonies, will not break the harmony and beauty of our worſhip, or diſturb the union and peace of our church." And the pious biſhop *Bradford* charitably ſaid, "I always did, and always ſhall heartily wiſh, and if it were in my power, I ſhould endeavour, that all the liturgies of the church, were reduced to as great ſimplicity and plainneſs as poſſible."

Theſe are ſome of the many reaſons and authorities that might be produced in favour of a review and for the improvement of our liturgy: Reaſons plain and eaſy to be underſtood, and which none but prejudiced minds can juſtly oppoſe, and the deſign has been deemed ſo neceſſary, juſt and reaſonable, that ſeveral great men at different times, have uſed their utmoſt endeavours to get it accompliſhed. It may be proper briefly to mention two attempts of this kind.

In the year 1668, it was propoſed by lord keeper *Bridgman*, lord chief juſtice *Hale*, biſhop *Wilkins*, *Stillingfleet*, *Burton*, &c. as follows. "To read the pſalms of the new tranſlation; to uſe other leſſons inſtead of the Apocrypha; not to enjoin the uſe of godfathers and godmothers, when the parents will ſtand; no part of the office of baptiſm to be repeated in public, when the child hath been baptiſed; not to enjoin reading the commination; to omit all the reſponſes, from, *O lord open thou our lips*, &c. to the litany; and from *Son of God we beſeech*, &c. to *We humbly beſeech thee*, &c. to uſe the Lord's prayer only once, and that after the abſolution, except before ſermon; to uſe the *gloria patri* only once, to wit, after the reading pſalms; to omit the *venite exultemus*, and the communion ſervice, when no communion, except the ten command-

commandments which may be read after the creed, ſaying after the laſt, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep theſe laws*; to omit the collects, epiſtles and goſpels, except on holidays; to inſert the prayer for the parliament in the litany, after that for the royal family; to omit the two hymns in the conſecration of biſhops, and ordination of prieſts." The other alterations then propoſed, are printed in the column at the end of this eſſay.

The next attempt in favour of this deſign, was in 1689, when a ſpecial commiſſion iſſued from the king, to ſeveral biſhops and dignitaries of the church, the laſt clauſe of which runs thus. "We therefore out of our pious and princely care, for the good order and edification, and unity of the church of *England*, and for the reconciling if poſſible all differences among our good ſubjects, have authoriſed and impowered you, *&c.* to prepare ſuch alterations of the liturgy and canons, and ſuch propoſals for the reformation of eccleſiaſtical courts, and to conſider of ſuch other matters, as in your judgments may moſt conduce to the ends abovementioned. Archbiſhop *Wake* gave this character of theſe commiſſioners. "They were a ſet of men, than which this church was never at any one time bleſſed with either wiſer or better, ſince it was a church." And ſays *Burnet*, "they were named ſo impartially, that no exceptions could be againſt any of them."

Both theſe laſt prelates inform us, that the ſeven biſhops had mentioned this matter in their famous petition to king *James*, for which they were afterwards tried; that the clergy in general about the ſame time, expreſſed an inclination of the like kind; and that king *William* was bound by a promiſe of his own, to endeavour

deavour an union between the church and diſſenters; and it ought to be remembered, that in the very laſt directions which archbiſhop *Sancroft* ſent to the biſhops and clergy of his province in 1688, his advice was, "that they warmly and moſt affectionately exhort their brethren the proteſtant diſſenters, to join with us in daily fervent prayers to the God of peace, for an univerſal bleſſed union of all reformed churches, both at home and abroad, againſt our common enemies; and that all who do confeſs the name of our dear lord, and do agree in the truth of his holy word, may alſo meet in one *holy communion*."

Dr. *Nicholls* gives us this account of the alterations then intended. "The commiſſioners begin with a review of the common prayer book, chapters out of the canonical books, are to be ſubſtituted in the room of the apocryphal leſſons. The collects are all reviſed, and moſt of them made new, and rendered more ſuitable to the epiſtles and goſpels of the day; and this with ſo much elegance and purity of ſtile, with ſo much pious force and ardor, as nothing could tend more to excite devotion in the minds of the hearers, and to raiſe up their ſouls. They were drawn up by Dr. *Patrick*, Dr. *Burnet* added a farther life, force and ſpirit to them. After this they underwent the exquiſite judgment of Dr. *Stillingfleet*; the laſt and finiſhing ſtroke being given to them by Dr. *Tillotſon*, who poliſhed over whatever was left rough in the compoſitions, with his ſmooth language, and flowingneſs of his eaſy eloquence." This is a ſtrong evidence to prove, how much our liturgy might be improved, if undertaken by perſons of ability.

"They

" They likewiſe agreed upon a new tranſlation of the pſalms, more agreeable to the original than the preſent. This was aſſigned to Dr. *Kidder*, a perſon excellently well verſed in the oriental tongues; ſome expreſſions found fault with in the liturgy, were collected by Dr. *Tenniſon*; ſuch clear expreſſions being ſubſtituted in their ſtead, as were not liable to be excepted againſt by the moſt captious. It was alſo propoſed that the croſs in baptiſm ſhould be uſed or omitted, at the election of the parents; that any diſſenting miniſter who conformed, ſhould not be new ordained, but only conditionally*."
Beſides theſe, the following particulars were alſo intended.

" That the chanting of divine ſervice in the cathedrals ſhall be laid aſide; that beſides the pſalms read in their courſe, ſome private and devout ones ſhall be ſelected for Sunday; thoſe who refuſe the lord's ſupper kneeling, may receive it in their pews; that a rubric be made declaring the intention of the lent faſt, and the meaning of rogation ſundays and ember weeks; that the abſolution be read by a deacon, and the word *prieſt* changed for *miniſter*; that the *gloria patri* be only ſaid at the end of all the pſalms; that the *benedicite* be changed for the 128th pſalm; and other pſalms appointed for the *benedictus* and *nunc dimittis*; the verſicles after the lord's prayer to be read kneeling; and after *give peace in our time, O Lord*, ſhall follow an anſwer, promiſing ſomething on the people's part; all titles of the king, queen, *&c.* to be omitted, and only the word *ſovereign* retained; the prayer, *O God whoſe nature and property*, &c. to be omitted; if any refuſe the ſurplice, the biſhop may ſubſtitute

* *Nichols*'s Defence, p. 117.

ſtitute another to officiate, if the people deſire it, and the living will bear it; but this is left to the biſhop; godfathers and godmothers may be omitted where deſired; [as to the *Athanaſian* creed there has been ſo many different things ſaid about what alterations were then intended, that I here chuſe to avoid ſaying any thing;] Whether the reading pſalms made by *Lloyd* and *Kidder*, or that in the bible ſhall be inſerted in the common-prayer-book, was to be left to the convocation; in the litany, communion ſervice, *&c.* as alſo in the canons, ſome alterations were to be made,* with ſuch others as are printed in the column at the end of this tract. But there were many more; great pity it is, that they are not made public, and how happy for our church, had theſe alterations been then effected.

The learned *Wake*, when biſhop of *Lincoln*, thus expreſſed himſelf in the houſe of lords, concerning this affair. "My lords, ſays he, let any impartial perſon conſider, what was there in ſuch a deſign, that could juſtly be eſteemed prejudicial to the conſtitution of our church? wherein would our canons have ſuffered, if thoſe already made had been more ſtrongly enforced, and ſome new ones added for the reformation of manners, for the better puniſhing of notorious offenders, and to render our public diſcipline more ſtrict and ſevere? This we have been wiſhing for ever ſince the reformation; what harm would it have done our church, had it now been effected? Or how would our excellent liturgy have been the worſe, if a few more doubtful expreſſions had been changed for plainer and clearer; and a paſſage or two, which however capable

* Proceedings of Eccleſiaſt. Commiſſion in 1689.

capable of a juſt defence, yet in many caſes ſeem harſh to ſome of our communion, had either been wholly left at liberty in ſuch caſes to be omitted; or ſo qualified, as to remove all exceptions againſt them in any caſe; if ſuch collects as are not adapted to the feſtivals or goſpels to which they belong, had been made more full and appoſite to both; if ſome of the occaſional offices had been enlarged and new ones added; if there had been a greater variety of prayers, pſalms and leſſons appointed by authority, inſtead of the compoſitions of private perſons, for the viſitation of the ſick; and new forms compoſed for the uſe of priſoners, for debt or crimes*; for the greater ſolemnity of receiving proſelytes into our church, of reconciling penitents to it, and of rejecting notorious offenders; theſe were ſome of the main things that were then deſigned, and could theſe alterations have injured the church?

Biſhop *Burnet*'s obſervation on theſe proceedings, is in theſe words. "Though our worſhip is the perfecteſt compoſition of devotion, we find in any church antient or modern, yet the corrections that were agreed to by a deputation of biſhops and divines in the year 1689, would make the whole frame of our liturgy ſtill more perfect and unexceptionable; and will I hope at ſome time or other, be better entertained, than they were then†." The learned dean *Prideaux* had alſo great expectations from this convocation; he hoping that many things would have been done for the advantage of our church, eſpecially in improving and amending our liturgy,

D and

* There is an excellent one compoſed by the *Iriſh* Biſhops, in 1711, and is it not as neceſſary for us?

† Hiſtory of his own times, vol. ii. p. 634.

and was much grieved at their ill ſucceſs. For he thought, " that were all thoſe places in our liturgy, that are with any juſtice excepted againſt, corrected and amended, and what is wanting therein ſupplied, as many hoped would have been done by this convocation, that all our offices might have been rendered ſo compleat, perfect and unexceptionable, that not only many of the diſſenters amongſt us, but alſo foreign churches of the proteſtant communion, might have been perſuaded to introduce them into their public religious aſſemblies, and unite in the ſame form of worſhip, as well as in the ſame faith with us*."

Perhaps ſome will be ready to aſk, why theſe alterations if they were ſo advantagious were not made? To which I anſwer, that *prejudice*, *private views*, *reſentment* and *the want of a ſerious regard for true religion*, interpoſed to prevent it; an inſtance we have of this in Dr. *Jane*, who indeed was the principal occaſion, that nothing did then ſucceed; for he being choſen prolocutor of the lower houſe of convocation, as ſoon as he got into the chair, oppoſed every thing that was propoſed, or intended by the royal commiſſion†. The reaſon of this was, it ſeems, becauſe when the Prince of *Orange* was at *Hungerford*, in his march to *London*, the doctor with three others was ſent from the univerſity of *Oxford*, to make him an offer of their plate, which the prince handſomely refuſed; but the doctor thought he had merited whatever he ſhould requeſt, and he accordingly aſked the biſhopric of *Exeter*, then void; and not ſucceeding therein, for it had been promiſed to biſhop *Trelawny*, this ſo far diſguſted him, that he

* *Prideaux*'s life. † Ibid. p. 53, 54.

was ever after a profeſſed enemy to king *William* and his government, of which his conduct in this affair was a ſtrong inſtance.

Thus was this grand deſign defeated at that time, by the artifices of crafty men, though under a pretended religious zeal for the church. It being evident that Dr. *Jane*'s oppoſition did not ariſe from any apprehenſion of danger to the church, but was merely the effect of private reſentment becauſe he was not made a biſhop; and it ſhould be remembered that Dr. *Jane* was the very man who drew up the famous *Oxford* decree.

I cannot here omit the ſentiments of biſhop *Burnet* on the preſent occaſion*. " I have always had a true zeal for the church of *England*; I have lived in its communion with great joy, and have purſued its true intereſt with an unfeigned affection; yet I muſt ſay there are many things in it, that have been very uneaſy to me. The requiring ſubſcription to the thirty-nine articles is a great impoſition; I believe them all myſelf, but as thoſe about original ſin and predeſtination might be expreſſed more unexceptionably, ſo I think it is a better way, to let ſuch matter continue to be ſtill the ſtandard of doctrine, with ſome few corrections, and to cenſure thoſe who teach any contrary tenets; than to oblige all who ſerve in the church, to ſubſcribe them. The greater part ſubſcribe without ever examining them; and others do it becauſe they muſt do it, though they can hardly ſatisfy their conſciences about ſome things in them. Churches and ſocieties are much better ſecured by laws, than by ſubſcriptions."

* *Burnet*'s concluſion to the hiſt. of his own times.

" I wiſh for peace ſake ſome things may be taken away, and that others may be ſoftened and explained; many of theſe things were retained at the reformation, to draw the people more entirely into it; who are apt to judge, eſpecially in times of ignorance, by outward appearances, more than by the real value of things, and this was a juſt and lawful conſideration; but it is now at and end, none are brought over from popery by this means; and therefore there is not the ſame neceſſity for continuing them now, as at firſt. No inconvenience could follow on leaving out the croſs in baptiſm, or in laying aſide ſurplices, and regulating cathedrals, eſpecially as to that indecent way of ſinging prayers, and of laymen's reading the litany; all bowings to the altar have at leaſt an ill appearance, and are of no uſe; the excluding parents from being ſponſors in baptiſm, and requiring them to procure others, is extremely inconvenient, and makes that to be a mockery, rather than a ſolemn ſponſion in too many; other things may be ſo explained, that no juſt exceptions could lie to them; thus I wiſh the terms of communion were made larger and eaſier."

And ſays Dr. *Marſhal*, " It is the glory of the *Engliſh* church, and what ſhe often boaſts of, that ſhe is the neareſt of any now in the chriſtian world, to the primitive model. It is not I preſume denied, that ſhe might be nearer ſtill; and if her glory be great for being ſo near, it would certainly be greater if ſhe was yet nearer.*"

Dr. *Rogers* writes much to the ſame purpoſe. " As I acknowledge for myſelf, ſo I preſume I may for the greater part of my brethren, that we judge our preſent conſtitution might in many respects

* Preface to tranſl. of St. *Cyprian.*

reſpects be altered for the better; ſome of us imagine we ſee defects in one part, and ſome in another*."

I have only two things more to obſerve, the one concerns the not uſing the Lord's prayer, or any creed more than once, in the morning ſervice; and the other for exchanging the *Athanaſian* creed for the apoſtles or *Nicene*. As to the frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer, it plainly appears, that it was never intended by our reformers, in regard the morning prayer, litany, and communion ſervice were formerly diſtinct offices, and uſed ſeparately at different hours, and then it was very proper, that the lord's prayer and a creed ſhould be in each office. But as they are now joined together, and make one and the ſame ſervice, neither of them ought to be uſed more than once, and for this reaſon, St. *Chryſiſtom*'s prayer is omitted in the morning ſervice when the litany is uſed, though added to both offices, and let reaſon govern us in one caſe as well as the other. To uſe the Lord's prayer once in our public worſhip, is moſt reaſonable, as it is an excellent, full and comprehenſive form, compoſed by our Saviour himſelf; but it ought not to be treated like a charm. If once uſing it at any one time of worſhip be not enough; who can direct us how often it ſhould be uſed? It may be as well inſiſted upon to be ſaid after every other prayer, as to be repeated more than once, at any one time of worſhip. As to the *Athanaſian* creed, my intended brevity will not permit me to enlarge on that head; but I would refer the reader to the *reaſons for exchanging that creed for the apoſtles or* Hieroſolymitan *creed*†, &c.

* Addreſs to Diſſenters, p. 87.

† Publiſhed by *Griffiths*.

" I wiſh for peace ſake ſome things may be taken away, and that others may be ſoftened and explained; many of theſe things were retained at the reformation, to draw the people more entirely into it; who are apt to judge, eſpecially in times of ignorance, by outward appearances, more than by the real value of things, and this was a juſt and lawful conſideration; but it is now at and end, none are brought over from popery by this means; and therefore there is not the ſame neceſſity for continuing them now, as at firſt. No inconvenience could follow on leaving out the croſs in baptiſm, or in laying aſide ſurplices, and regulating cathedrals, eſpecially as to that indecent way of ſinging prayers, and of laymen's reading the litany; all bowings to the altar have at leaſt an ill appearance, and are of no uſe; the excluding parents from being ſponſors in baptiſm, and requiring them to procure others, is extremely inconvenient, and makes that to be a mockery, rather than a ſolemn ſponſion in too many; other things may be ſo explained, that no juſt exceptions could lie to them; thus I wiſh the terms of communion were made larger and eaſier."

And ſays Dr. *Marſhal*, " It is the glory of the *Engliſh* church, and what ſhe often boaſts of, that ſhe is the neareſt of any now in the chriſtian world, to the primitive model. It is not I preſume denied, that ſhe might be nearer ſtill; and if her glory be great for being ſo near, it would certainly be greater if ſhe was yet nearer.*"

Dr. *Rogers* writes much to the ſame purpoſe. " As I acknowledge for myſelf, ſo I preſume I may for the greater part of my brethren, that we judge our preſent conſtitution might in many respects

* Preface to tranſl. of St. *Cyprian.*

reſpects be altered for the better; ſome of us imagine we ſee defects in one part, and ſome in another*."

I have only two things more to obſerve, the one concerns the not uſing the Lord's prayer, or any creed more than once, in the morning ſervice; and the other for exchanging the *Athanaſian* creed for the apoſtles or *Nicene*. As to the frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer, it plainly appears, that it was never intended by our reformers, in regard the morning prayer, litany, and communion ſervice were formerly diſtinct offices, and uſed ſeparately at different hours, and then it was very proper, that the lord's prayer and a creed ſhould be in each office. But as they are now joined together, and make one and the ſame ſervice, neither of them ought to be uſed more than once, and for this reaſon, St. *Chryſiſtom*'s prayer is omitted in the morning ſervice when the litany is uſed, though added to both offices, and let reaſon govern us in one caſe as well as the other. To uſe the Lord's prayer once in our public worſhip, is moſt reaſonable, as it is an excellent, full and comprehenſive form, compoſed by our Saviour himſelf; but it ought not to be treated like a charm. If once uſing it at any one time of worſhip be not enough; who can direct us how often it ſhould be uſed? It may be as well inſiſted upon to be ſaid after every other prayer, as to be repeated more than once, at any one time of worſhip. As to the *Athanaſian* creed, my intended brevity will not permit me to enlarge on that head; but I would refer the reader to the *reaſons for exchanging that creed for the apoſtles or* Hieroſolymitan *creed*†, &c.

* Addreſs to Diſſenters, p. 87.

† Publiſhed by *Griffiths*.

&c. only permit me to take a few extracts from thence.

" As the doctrine of the trinity is generally allowed to be a great myſtery, I ſubmit it to the conſideration of thoſe who are in authority, whether as the *Athanaſian* creed has occaſioned much ſtrife and contention, and many uncharitable diſputes among chriſtians, it might not be an inſtance of great wiſdom, prudence and charity in our governors, to have it omitted in our public worſhip, and in the articles of religion, and to uſe the apoſtles or *Hieroſolymitan* creed, inſtead of that? My reaſons are, firſt, becauſe many learned, orthodox, and good chriſtians of our church, both of the clergy and laity have been greatly diſſatisfied with it, on account of its metaphiſical explication of the trinity, which all muſt admit to be incomprehenſible. For what finite being can comprehend, the nature and eſſence of an infinite God? 2dly, Becauſe the true faith will be equally ſecured and preſerved among us, by the uſe of either of the other creeds, both which contain the ſum and ſubſtance, or fundamental articles of the chriſtian faith," as the author proves from the beſt authorities. As to the firſt,

Chillingworth thus writes, " the damning ſentences in St. *Athanaſius*'s creed, as we are made to ſubſcribe it, are moſt falſe, and in a high degree preſumptuous and ſchiſmatical; and therefore I cannot ſubſcribe it to be agreeable to the word of God, ſeeing I believe it to be repugnant thereto." Biſhop *Taylor* obſerves, " that it is very hard to put uncharitableneſs into the creed, and ſo make it an article of faith; which perhaps was no faith of *Athanaſius*, if we may believe *Aquinas*; nay, poſſibly the creed was not his, it being written in *Latin*, which in all

reaſon

reason he did not." Dr. *Nichols* says, "that *Athanasius* was not the author." Dr. *Cudworth* assures us, "that it was written a long time after by some other hand." Nay, Dr. *Waterland* proves the same in his critical history on that creed. Bishop *Burnet* observes, "that the creed ascribed to *Athanasius*, as it was none of his, so it was never established by any general council." Archbishop *Tillotson* says, "The account given of *Athanasius*'s creed, seems no way satisfactory, I wish we were well rid of it." Dr. *Cave* informs us "that the difficulties in this creed, have to many learned and considerate men, seemed very great." And says Dr. *Bennet*, "in the *Athanasian* creed, we do not declare, that the belief of every proposition thereof is necessary to salvation." *Laud*, *Hammond*, *Pearson* and *Stillingfleet*, have written their minds fully as to this matter, and abundantly declared, that the belief of the procession from the father and the son, which is asserted in the *Athanasian* creed, is not necessary to salvation; this demonstrates, that the belief of every proposition of the *Athanasian* creed is not thought by our church, to be necessary to salvation."

"If then the belief of every proposition in the *Athanasian* creed, is not thought by our church, to be necessary to salvation;" why then should this abstruse creed be made the terms of communion, and be required to be believed, upon the peril of damnation? For Archbishop *Syng* well observes, "that no doctrine is to be imposed, either to be believed or put in practice, as necessary to salvation; besides what has been taught as such, by *Christ* or his apostles." From hence I infer, that whatever creed contains articles, which are not necessary to salvation, ought

not to be required of any man to be believed, as an article of faith; becauſe nothing ought to be believed as an article of faith, but what is neceſſary to ſalvation; but the *Athanaſian* creed does contain propoſitions not neceſſary to ſalvation; and therefore ought not to be required to be believed as an article of faith."

"My ſecond reaſon for ſuch an exchange is, becauſe the apoſtles and *Hieroſolymitan* creeds, one of which is recommended inſtead of the other, do contain, the chief and fundamental articles of the chriſtian faith. If this be fully proved of the apoſtles, it muſt be ſufficient, the other being yet more explicit, full and comprehenſive. St. *Auſtin* ſays, "that whatſoever is prefigured in the patriarchs, declared in the ſcriptures, or foretold in the prophets, concerning the bleſſed trinity, and the myſtery of our ſaviour's incarnation, death and crucifixion, is contained in the apoſtle's creed."

J. Caſſian tells us, "that the creed comprehends in few words, the faith of both teſtaments, and the ſenſe of the whole ſcriptures." *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Novatian*, and *Jerom*, call it, "the rule of faith." As to our modern divines, *Chillingworth* ſays, 'that the apoſtle's creed, contains all thoſe points of belief, which were by God's command, of neceſſity to be preached to all, and believed by all.—I believe that the apoſtle's creed, is a perfect ſummary of the fundamentals of the chriſtian faith." And biſhop *Pearſon*, "that the creed is a brief comprehenſion of the objects of our chriſtian faith, and is generally taken to *contain all things neceſſary to be believed.*" Biſhop *Taylor* informs us, "that the apoſtles, or their diſciples compoſed a creed, to be a rule of faith to all chriſtians; and unleſs

heretic

it contained all the true objects of faith, and the foundation of religion, to what purpose could it serve? All catechumens in the *latin* church coming to baptism, were interrogated concerning their faith, by this creed, and if more were necessary than the articles of the creed, why was it made the characteristic note of a christian, from an heretic, jew, or infidel? Or to what purpose was it composed? And if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any, that preserve the same entire? Will any one say, that the apostles denied communion to any man that believed the apostles creed, and lived a good life?" The church of *England* also expressly declares the same truth. For she requires in the catechism, that all her members should believe all the articles of the christian faith; which articles of their belief, are immediately added, in the words of the apostles creed; a most evident demonstration, that our church believes this creed to contain all the articles of the christian faith; and it is observable, that she requires no other confession of faith, either in the office of baptism for adult persons, or in the visitation of the sick.

The author then clearly proves, that several learned expositors on the church catechism, were of the same sentiments, with respect to the apostles creed, containing all the fundamental articles of the christian faith. In particular, he produces the authorities of archbishop *Wake*, bishop *Beveridge*, Dr. *Hole*, Dr. *Bennet*, Mr. *Ostervald*, lord *King*, Dr. *Bundy*, and archbishop *Synge*, besides those before mentioned, all of whom affirm, that the apostle's creed contains

the necessary articles of the christian faith; and he from thence concludes, it may very properly be used in the room of the *Athanasian*; but should not the apostles creed be thought sufficient, he then recommends the *Hierosolymitan* creed, as being more full and explicit, and of greater antiquity, than the *Nicene* or *Constantinopolitan*; and produces the character given of that creed by the learned bishop *Bull* and Mr. *Nelson*. He then thus proceeds. "The *Nicene* creed is so near to the *Hierosolymitan*, that I think whoever truly believes the one, must also the other, the difference being so immaterial; however the learned and pious bishop *Beveridge*'s observation on the *Nicene* creed deserves notice. Says he, "there were above three hundred fathers at one time in the council of *Nice* that unanimously subscribed unto it, among whom was *Athanasius*, who said thus of it, *let the things which were confessed by the* Nicene *council prevail, for they are right, and sufficient to overturn all the most wicked heresies, but especially the* Arian, *that blasphemes the word of God, and so necessarily speaketh evil of the holy ghost.* If then the *Nicene* creed was judged by above three hundred bishops, a test full and pertinent to secure the christan faith, at a time when it was most furiously attacked by the *Arian* heresy, and declar'd by *Athanasius* that it was sufficient for that purpose; what good reason can be assigned, why the *Athanasian* creed, which is so much disliked by many, should not be exchanged for the *Nicene*, if that of the apostles or the *Hierosolymitan*, should not be thought satisfactory; especially as *Athanasius* was not the real author of it." And having recommended a temper of moderation and christian charity, in a concern of so abstruse

and

and difficult nature, in the words of a very learned and judicious divine * ; he thus concludes.

" With the ſame view to peace, I beg leave to produce the obſervation of biſhop *Stillingfleet* ; " ſince both ſides yield, that the matter they diſpute about, is above their reach, the wiſeſt courſe they can take, is to aſſert and defend what is revealed, and not to be peremptory and quarrelſome about that which is acknowledged, to be above our comprehenſion ; I mean as to the manner, how *the three perſons partake of the divine nature.*" To this I will add, what biſhop *Bull* ſays. " In the firſt and beſt ages, the church of Chriſt directed all their prayers according to the ſcripture, to God only, through the alone mediation of Jeſus Chriſt." Indeed moſt of the prayers in the liturgy of the church of *England* are ſo directed, and why not all? Why ſhould not we follow the example of the primitive chriſtians, in the firſt and beſt ages of the church? Or is there any reaſon, that ſuch as contend for this, ſhould be branded with the name of infamy? I conclude with ſubmitting the following queries to the ſerious conſideration of all impartial good chriſtians, who would be glad to find out truth, and then to embrace it."

" Whether, he who believes in God the father, ſon and holy ſpirit, and offers up his prayers to almighty god, for the grace of his holy ſpirit, and the pardon of his ſins, through the alone mediation and interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, can with any truth and reaſon be called an *Arian* and no chriſtian, only becauſe he cannot believe all the articles of the *Athanaſian* creed, though he does thoſe of the apoſtles and

 Nicene?

* Atterbury.

Nicene? Or whether such an one be more heterodox than he who believes in three supreme self-existing gods? Because this last seems to be idolatry, unless words, when applied to the trinity, lose thir usual meaning; and whether the belief of the first, is not plainly agreeable to reason, scripture and primitive practice; and the other contrary both to natural and revealed religion, and the faith of the first and best ages." Give me leave to add, that this perfectly corresponds with the direction of our church; which requires of its ministers at their ordination, that they will continually pray to God the father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the holy Ghost*.

Very little has been said in answer to the many strong reasons and convincing arguments that have been produced, in favour of alterations, nor indeed can there be any just objection thereto, if regard be had to the truths of religion, and the purity of divine worship. However, there is one thing that I have met with urged against any alterations, which it may be proper to take some notice of; namely, that such an attempt will imply, that we have been all this time in error, and this will bring a reflection on the church of *England*. But this is so weak an objection, against so just, reasonable, and christian an undertaking, as scarce deserves an answer†. "For this reason or argument, if it be one, is equally conclusive against the reformation itself, against rectifying of any errors or mistakes, even after the strongest conviction of mind; against making any new acts of parliaments, or repealing old ones, that have

* Exhortation to priests in the office for ordaining them.

† Expediency, p. 3.

have been found prejudicial to the ſubject; and for the ſame reaſon would we act conſiſtently, let us prohibit the ſtudy of divinity, of phyſic, arts and ſciences, and reſtrain all manner of improvements in any the moſt uſeful parts of knowledge; nay, we may at once commit to the flames, the works of *Lock*, *Boyle*, *Newton*, and many other eminent writers, who have done infinite ſervices to the world, by refuting ancient hereſies, and making very conſiderable diſcoveries, for the benefit of mankind; and if we muſt reſiſt information, act in direct oppoſition to our knowledge, and the diſcoveries made by ourſelves, or other learned men; if we muſt perſiſt and perſevere in our errors and miſtakes, for no other reaſon, but becauſe we may be reflected on for not being ſooner wiſe, or for continuing ſo long in ignorance of ſome things; how juſtly may it be ſaid of us, *that light is come into the world, and we have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe our deeds are evil.* But will it not be a more diſcreet and chriſtian part, for us to look into and examine the ſtate of religion with us, both as to doctrine and the outward parts of worſhip; and if any errors are crept in, or whatever we can diſcover to be amiſs, to have the ſame rectified and amended. This ſurely will be the moſt prudent and eligible part, the method we ought to purſue, would we acquit ourſelves as honeſt men, true chriſtians and conſiſtent proteſtants.

I hope enough has been urged, to prove the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of what is here recommended, and which is alſo ſupported by ſome of the beſt authorities. But whoever would be more particularly informed in theſe points, I would refer them to the *free and candid diſquiſitions*; *The expediency and neceſſity of re-*

viſing

viſing the public liturgy; *A ſerious addreſs in favour of a review*; (from the two laſt of which I have taken ſome paragraphs) and *Reaſons humbly offered for compoſing a new ſet of articles of religion.* I beg leave to give you ſome part of the laſt author's frank and open, but reſpectful addreſs to the biſhops, in the following words.

"*My good moſt and right rev. lords the biſhops,*

Permit me to beſeech and intreat you, in the ſpirit of chriſtian meekneſs and humility, well to weigh and duly regard, what has been of late repreſented to your moſt ſerious conſideration, for a new tranſlation of the bible, a review and improvement of our liturgy, articles of faith, and canons of the church, in things neceſſary and expedient, the particulars of which have been ſo fairly, ſo reſpectfully, and with ſo much reaſon and ſtrength of argument, ſubmitted to your candid and impartial review, as fit and proper alterations and amendments to be made, cannot but leave ſome impreſſions on your lordſhips minds, indued with the principles of true chriſtianity. But my lords, of what uſe are reaſon, argument and conviction, if things which are proved to be actually amiſs, and to require alteration and correction, ſtill remain in the ſame unhappy ſtate, without being rectified and amended. If it appears to your lordſhips, that the things complained of do not want alteration, why do not your lordſhips publiſh an anſwer to what has been urged with ſuch ſtrength of reaſon, in favour of a reformation, with your names ſubſcribed thereto? This would be ſatisfactory; but without this, both the good and bad among us will think.—Or if your lordſhips are of an opinion that ſomething ſhould be done for the

honour

honour and greater purity and perfection of true religion; then ſurely, no good reaſon can be aſſigned, why it ſhould not be ſoon undertaken?

The apoſtles, your lordſhips predeceſſors in Chriſt's miniſtry, were not deterred from doing their duty, by any appearances of the moſt dreadful perſecutions, not even the moſt cruel deaths. But you, my lords, have none of theſe apprehenſions to fear or dread, and permit me to obſerve, what your lordſhips very well know, that no temporal or private views, ought to hinder you from performing the will of your lord and maſter, who laid down his life in charity to mankind, that we might live in peace and unity; in love and good will one towards another. Your lordſhips alſo know, that at the day of judgment, we are to anſwer for the neglects and omiſſions of duty, as well as for the commiſſion of ſin.—And therefore as biſhops under the great biſhop of ſouls, your goodneſs, your piety, your ſincerity, your love of truth and the chriſtian religion, will not ſuffer or permit you to neglect what is your duty.

I have clearly demonſtrated from the beſt authorities, and many more might be produced, that our preſent thirty-nine articles are no bar to exclude bad men; that they admit of various interpretations, and have been underſtood and ſubſcribed in very oppoſite and contrary ſenſes; ſo that a diverſity of opinions has not been prevented by ſubſcribing to them, nor yet an uniformity of ſentiments obtained; and therefore they are of no uſe or ſervice, unleſs to exclude ſome few from the church, who can in no ſenſe reconcile them to their own conſciences, ſo as to ſubſcribe them, and yet are otherwiſe very worthy good men. I have alſo proved that the act of

the 13th of *Elizabeth*, and by which the clergy are now bound, as to ſubſcribing the thirty-nine articles, does not require a ſubſcription to all the articles, but only to *thoſe that concern the true chriſtian faith, and the doctrine of the ſacraments*; and as theſe facts cannot be denied or refuted, how reaſonable, how neceſſary, how wiſe and chriſtian like would it be; either to have our articles reviewed, and others eſtabliſhed, that are more clear, certain and indiſputable? Or that none ſhould be forced to ſubſcribe to more than ſuch as only concern the true chriſtian faith and the doctrine of the ſacraments, as directed by the 13th of *Elizabeth*.

As our church is conſidered as the head of the proteſtant intereſt, and the centre of proteſtant unity, it behoves your lordſhips to be exceeding careful and ſolicitous to have removed out of it, all errors and miſtakes, or even blemiſhes, that may ſeem to render it leſs deſerving of the eſteem and imitation of other reformed churches; that ſo by the new luſtre of a brighter and clearer reformation, it may continue to be a more permanent pillar, a more ſolid bulwark of the proteſtant religion; alſo a model to others, as to the ſoundneſs of its doctrine, the purity of its worſhip, and the exactneſs of its diſcipline. This would be worthy of your lordſhips emulation, worthy of cotemporary biſhops in this learned and enlightened age, and redound to your lordſhips future glory, in generations to come; and if our liturgy, articles and canons, were once reviewed, altered and improved, we ſhould begin an æra of a new reformation." The words of a worthy and learned divine of our church alſo deſerves notice in this place.

The

"The chriſtian-world is now divided into the reformed and unreformed, or rather into thoſe who are not, and thoſe who are members of the church of *Rome*. The latter, as they deal leaſt in reaſon, are the moſt diſpoſed to uſe the *illuminating* arguments above mentioned, (*perſecution*) in the place of reaſon. They would willingly force upon us a mode of chriſtianity, which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear; our religious eſtabliſhment is far better and highly valuable, and we ſhould be ungrateful, if we did not eſteem it; but the more *ſimple and unexceptionable a religion is*, the dearer will it be to thoſe who underſtand it, and know what it is to enjoy it. In ſuch a religion, charity would be a gainer, and faith would be no loſer, and it would be an eaſier taſk to ſatisfy doubters, and to bring over infidels. Before the *Jews* ſhall be converted, and the *Gentiles* flow into the church, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that in the chriſtian world there will be more harmony, more mutual compliance and forbearance, than at preſent is to be found.

The removal even of ſmall defects, and improvement from good to better, ſhould always be the object of every man's warm wiſhes, modeſt and peaceable endeavours. Modeſt and peaceable they ought certainly to be; for there is a reverence due to the public, to civil ſociety, to rulers and magiſtrates, and to the majority; and decency and prudence are neither marks of the beaſt, nor that worldly wiſdom which ſtands condemned in the goſpel. In all ſuch endeavours, great care and diſcretion are requiſite.

Polite learning, or humanity, helps to open and enlarge the mind, and to give it a generous

 and

* *Jortin*'s remarks, p. 34, 36.

and liberal way of thinking, not what is vulgarly called *free thinking*, and belongs to vulgar underſtandings. Learning has a lovely child called moderation, and moderation is not afraid or aſhamed to ſhew her face in the theological world; the number of her friends is increaſed, and whilſt our civil conſtitution ſubſiſts, they are in no danger of being ſewed up in a bag with a monkey, a viper, a wit, and a free thinker, and flung into the next river. That *Liberty of prophecy* may prevail, and that *profane licentiouſneſs* may be reſtrained, are wiſhes which ſhould be always joined together*.

And now if men will ſay, *I perſuade to indifferency, I muſt bear it as well as I can.* I am not yet without remedy, as they are; *for patience will help me, and reaſon cannot cure them.* The words are from a pious, ingenious, learned, charitable, and ſweet tempered biſhop, (*Taylor*) who with a noble candour and generous openneſs, pleads the cauſe of *liberty of prophecying*; and who never was cenſured for it, by any man worth the mentioning, though probably he was reviled by thoſe, who called *Tillotſon* an atheiſt. If theſe two excellent prelates, and *Eraſmus* and *Chillingworth*, *John Hales* and *Lock*, *Epiſcopius* and *Grotius*, and many who ſhall not be named, had been contemporaries, and had met together FREELY, to determine the important queſtion, *What makes a man a chriſtian?* and what profeſſion of faith ſhould be deemed ſufficient? they would probably have agreed, notwithſtanding the diverſity of opinions, which they might all have had on ſome theological points. There have been others indeed, who on ſuch an occaſion would have given us an *ample catalogue of*

* Ibid. 40.

of neceſſaries, the inference from which would have been, that it muſt needs be a very *learned, and a very ſubtle, and a very ingenious thing to be a good chriſtian*; for ſome of theſe *neceſſaries are of ſo refined a nature*, that *the underſtanding can hardly lay hold of them*, or *the memory retain them**.

Some of the beſt defenders of chriſtianity, down from *Origen*, no ſaint, it ſeems, but worth an hundred and fifty ſaints who might be mentioned, have been unkindly uſed and traduced by injudicious chriſtians, for a harder epithet ſhall not be given them. *Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?* Even civil-war has ceaſed, when the common enemy has been at the door; but chriſtians, when beſieged by powerful and formidable infidels, have found leiſure and ſtomach to contend, whether the light which ſhone about Chriſt at his transfiguration, was created or uncreated†?

The confirming and ſetling theſe great points, upon which our faith is founded, without a view to any particular ſyſtems and controverſies, as it is the moſt agreable employment, to an ingenuous mind, ſo it is uſually the moſt diſintereſted of all occupations. But whoſoever is reſolved to employ his hours and labours in this manner, ſhould conſider himſelf as one who lays out his fortune, in mending the high ways, *many are benefitted, and few are obliged.* If he eſcapes obloquy, it is very well.—*Triumpho, ſi licet me latere tecto abſcedere*‖."

It is the opinion of ſome judicious perſons, that it might be of ſervice to print in oppoſite columns, the alterations propoſed in 1668, and 1689 with the preſent liturgy, that every one may

* Ibid. 40. † Ibid 42. ‖ Ibid 86.

may ſee the difference; I have accordingly complyed with their requeſt. Beſides theſe, I have preſumed to ſuggeſt ſome other amendments, which if altered would be a vaſt improvement of our liturgy. But I would not have any imagine, that the alterations propoſed by me, are with a view to be eſtabliſhed, they being only publiſhed, to ſhew how much the prayers might be improved, would our biſhops and clergy undertake it; no doubt to as much advantage, as the collects were before obſerved by Dr. *Nichols* to be, in 1689. I ſhall conclude all in the words of biſhop *Burnet*.

" * Religion, if truly received and ſincerely adhered to, would prove the greateſt of all bleſſings to a nation. But by religion I underſtand ſomewhat more than the receiving ſome doctrines though ever ſo true, or the profeſſing them, and engaging to ſupport them, not without zeal and eagerneſs; what ſignify the beſt doctrines, if men do not live ſuitably to them; if they have not a due influence upon their thoughts, their principles, and their lives? Men of bad lives, with ſound opinions, are ſelf condemned, and lie under a highly aggravated guilt; nor will the heat of a party ariſing out of intereſt, and managed with fury and violence, compenſate for the ill lives of ſuch falſe pretenders to zeal, while they are a diſgrace to that, which they profeſs and ſeem ſo hot for. By religion, I do not mean an outward compliance with form and cuſtom, and going to church, to prayers, to ſermons, and to ſacraments, with an external ſhew of devotion; or which is more, with ſome inward forced good thoughts in which many ſatisfy themſelves, while this has no viſible effect on

* Concluſion to his hiſtory.

on their lives, nor any inward force to subdue and rectify their appetites, passions and secret designs. These customary performances, how good and useful soever, when well understood, and rightly directed, are of little value when men rest on them, and think that because they do them, they have therefore acquitted themselves of their duty, though they continue still proud, covetous, full of deceit, envy and malice; so that by religion I mean, such a sense of divine truths, as enters into a man, and becomes a spring of a new nature within him; reforming his thoughts and designs, purifying his heart, sanctifying him, and governing his whole deportment, his words as well as actions.—This is true religion, the perfection of human nature."

The Hierosolymitan Creed.

I Believe in one God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible: and in one lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, only begotten, born of the father before all worlds, true God, by whom all things were made; incarnate and made man, crucified and buried; but who rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the father: and who shall come to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end: and in the Holy Ghost the comforter, who hath spoken by the prophets: and in the baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins: and in one holy catholic church: and in the resurrection of the flesh: and in the life everlasting. *Amen.*

Alterations propoſed in 1668.

In the office of Baptiſm*.

Preſent liturgy	Alterations.
By ſpiritual regeneration.	To be omitted.
Wilt thou be baptiſed?	Wilt thou have this child to be baptiſed?
Thee to regenerate this infant with thy holy ſpirit, to receive him for thy own child by adoption, and to incorporate him.	Thee to receive this infant into thy holy church.
Child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Chriſt's church.	Child is received into the church of Chriſt.

In the office of confirmation.

Vouchſafed to regenerate theſe thy ſervants by water and the holy ghoſt, and haſt given unto them forgiveneſs of all their ſins, ſtrengthen them, *&c.*	Vouchſafed to receive theſe thyſervants,ſtrengthen them, *&c.*

Office of matrimony.

With my body I thee worſhip.	To omit theſe words.
O God, who has conſecrated the ſtate of matrimony, to ſuch an excellent myſtery, that in it is ſignified and repreſented, the ſpiritual marriage and unity betwixt Chriſt and his church.	This paragraph to be omitted.

In the burial office.

Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himſelf the ſoul of our dear brother, *&c.*	Almighty God, to take out of this world, the ſoul of our brother.

In

* There is a very good office for baptiſm and burial in the Expediency.

In ſure and certain hope.	In a full aſſurance of the reſurrection of our lord Jeſus Chriſt. [or rather in full aſſurance of riſing again at the laſt day, thro' our lord Jeſus Chriſt.]
N. B. This cannot be ſaid with any truth of many who are buried.	This paragraph to be omitted; for
We give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleaſed thee to deliver this our brother out of the miſeries of this ſinful world.	Should we thank God for taking a good perſon from his family, in his proſperity and prime of life?
As our hope is this our brother doth.	This to be omitted, for how can we hope this of a wicked perſon?

Communion ſervice*.

That our ſinful bodies may be made clean by his body.	That our ſins may be blotted out by the merits of his precious body and blood.

In the Catechiſm.

What is your name? to add.	When was this name given you?
What was promiſed for you in your baptiſm?	Anſwer, three things were promiſed for me.
How many ſacraments hath Chriſt ordained?	Anſwer, two only, baptiſm and the lord's ſupper.

Alterations in 1689.

Prieſt to be changed for	Miniſter.
The abſolution and remiſſion of their ſins.	And remiſſion to be omitted.
Thine honourable true and only ſon.	Thine only begotten ſon.
Grant that he may vanquiſh and overcome all his enemies	Proſper all his righteous or juſt undertakings againſt thy enemies.

Who

* See the Expediency.

Who alone worketh great marvels.	Who alone art the author of all good gifts.
The healthful ſpirit of thy grace.	The holy ſpirit of thy grace (or rather the grace of thy holy ſpirit.)

N. B. There were a great many more alterations recommended in 1689; great pity it is that they are not made public. Might it not be worthy of the ſerious conſideration of that eminently great and good prelate in whoſe power it is for to oblige the world with the publication of them, as it might tend to give ſatisfaction to all parties, and promote a farther union amongſt us? And whoever conſiders the amendments that were propoſed in 1668, and 1689, which are before mentioned, muſt admit, unleſs greatly prejudiced, that had they taken place, it would have been much to the glory and honour of our church. The following alterations are alſo ſubmitted to conſideration, as what would tend ſtill to make our liturgy more compleat and perfect.

In the confeſſion.	Alterations now propoſed.
We have erred and ſtrayed from thy ways like loſt ſheep.	We have greatly diſobeyed thy holy will and commandments.
And there is no health in us.	And we are not worthy to be called thy children.

In the abſolution.

The abſolution or remiſſion of ſins.	The declaration of God's pardon to penitent ſinners.
The abſolution and remiſſion of their ſins.	The pardon and forgiveneſs of their ſins.
He pardoneth and abſolveth.	God will pardon and abſolve.
	After ſhall ſhew forth thy praiſe, a proper hymn to be ſaid.

Collect for grace.

The beginning of this day, add	For which we praiſe thy divine majeſty.

We

* See the expediency.

We fall into no ſin, neither run into any kind of danger.	That no temptation to ſin may overcome us, nor any evil accident befal us.
Doings, by thy governance.	Actions, by thy infinite wiſdom.

Prayer for the king.

So repleniſh him.	So aſſiſt him with thy holy ſpirit.
Incline to thy will and walk in thy way.	Obey thy will and commandments.
Plenteouſly with heavenly gifts.	endue him with thy heavenly grace.
Wealth.	Felicity.

In the litany*.

All other deadly ſins.	All heinous ſins.
From ſudden death.	From ſudden and unprepared death.
To illuminate all biſhops.	To enlighten all biſhops.
All that travel.	All that lawfully travel.
To look upon our infirmities.	Our failings and infirmities.
Turn from us.	Keep or remove from us.

In the prayer for all conditions of men.

To make thy ways known unto them, thy ſaving health unto all nations.	To make thy will known unto them, thy truth and ſalvation to all nations.

In the communion office.

Inſpiration of thy holy ſpirit.	The grace of thy holy ſpirit.

The prayer for the church militant.

They may hear and receive.	May now and at all times hear.

* See the expediency.

First exhortation.

Sacrament of the body and blood of Chriſt.	The ſacrament of the lord's ſupper.
Not only to die for us, but alſo to be our ſpiritual food and ſuſtenance in that holy.	To die for us, whoſe death and paſſion we commemorate, in that holy ſacrament.

Exhortation before the communion.

Of the body and blood of our Saviour Chriſt.	Or ſupper of our lord.
For then we ſpiritually eat the fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Chriſt and Chriſt in us; we are one with Chriſt and Chriſt with us.	To omit theſe words.
N. B. As theſe words favour very much the belief of the real preſence, they certainly ought to be omitted.	*N. B.* The celebrated Mr. *Hales* ſays, "that in the communion there is nothing given but bread and wine. Jeſus Chriſt is eaten there neither ſpiritually, nor really, neither metaphorically, nor literally. That which is eaten is truly and properly bread. The ſpiritual eating of Chriſt is common to all places." *Hales*'s tracts, p. 57.
We are guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt our Saviour, we eat and drink our own damnation, not conſidering the lord's body.	Omit this paragraph, for the reaſons above.
Grant us therefore to eat the fleſh of thy dear ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and to drink his blood, that our ſinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our ſouls waſhed through his moſt precious blood.	Grant therefore we beſeech thee, that we may with a lively faith and due reverence, an inflamed love and thankful rememembrance, commemorate our Saviour's death and paſſion when we eat this bread and drink this wine, according to his holy inſtitution and commandment; this we beg thro' thy ſon our lord.

In

In the prayer of conſecration.

May be partakers of his moſt bleſſed body and blood.	This to be omitted.
Take and eat this in remembrance.	Eat this bread in
Drink this in remembrance.	Drink this wine in
The ſecond prayer after receiving.	To be omitted, and another compoſed *.
Prevent us, O lord, &c.	Bleſs us, O lord, in all our juſt undertakings with thy moſt

In the catechiſm.

What is the inward and ſpiritual grace?	What is inwardly ſignified by baptiſm?
Anſ. A death unto ſin, *&c.*	Anſ. The dying unto ſin and living unto righteouſneſs, and being thereby made a member of Chriſt's church.
What is the outward part or ſign of rhe lord's ſupper?	Anſ. Bread and wine, which our ſaviour commanded to be received as ſymbols of his body and blood.
Anſ. Bread and wine which the lord hath commanded *&c.*	
What is the inward part or thing ſignified?	Anſ. The body of Chriſt crucified, and his blood ſhed for the redemption of mankind.
Anſ. The body and blood of Chriſt, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the lord's ſupper.	
Anſ. The ſtrengthening and refreſhing of our ſouls by the body and blood of Chriſt, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.	Anſ. All who with ſincere repentance and true faith, partake of the lord's ſupper, may hope for the pardon of their ſins, the aſſiſtance of god's grace, and for all the benefits of Chriſt's paſſion.

* See the expediency.

The

The viſitation of the ſick.

Abſolution.

Our lord Jeſus Chriſt who hath left power to his church to abſolve all ſinners who truly repent, *&c.* and by his authority committed to me, I abſolve thee from all thy ſins.	This prayer is what occaſions papiſts to ſay we allow of abſolution, and therefore ſhould be changed for that in the communion office.

In the commination.

Who turn to thee in weeping, faſting and praying, *&c.*	Who are truly ſorry and penitent for all our ſins.
And let not thine heritage be brought to confuſion.	And let all thy people be pardoned and ſaved.

In the form of making deacons.

Do you truſt that you are inwardly moved by the holy ghoſt?	Do you think yourſelf duly qualified to take upon you this office?

In the form of ordaining prieſts.

Receive the holy ghoſt for the office.	This to be changed.
The office of conſecrating biſhops and churches.	Theſe ought to be altered, in many particulars.

SIR,

THE foregoing ſheets were ſent to the preſs, ſometime before you advertiſed your pamphlet, but I thought it prudent to defer the publication of them, till yours came out, and am very glad I did ſo; becauſe however we may happen to differ in ſome particulars, which is not to be wondered at, yet I apprehend we both agree in the main point, that ſome alterations in our liturgy, and the conſtitution of our church, are very expedient, if not abſolutely neceſſary to be made. This I hope will have a good tendency to enforce the deſign of my little eſſay, which is chiefly calculated, to recommend to the conſideration of all perſons, a plan for that purpoſe, not of my own contrivance, but that of ſome of the greateſt and moſt eminent divines, that ever adorned our eſtabliſhed church; but to be yet farther improved, as ſhall he judged neceſſary by our governors.

Your obſervations on the *candid diſquiſitions*, and the conduct of the diſſenters in this affair, I muſt leave to be particularly conſidered, by thoſe whom it more immediately concerns, if any ſhall think it proper, unleſs where it directly falls in my way; being obliged to have all poſſible regard to brevity in this epiſtle. With this view, and for the reader's benefit, I will firſt repreſent in your own words, what you have ſuggeſted in favour of reviewing and altering our liturgy and eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, and make a few curſory remarks thereon; and then will endeavour to remove ſome objections urged by you, with reſpect to other alterations; which ſeem to many, equally neceſſary to be made, and that without any fatal conſequences attending it.

In

In your preface you write, " that you no more affect to be considered as an adversary to the gentlemen concerned in the free and candid disquisitions, than to be thought their associate, and to write in concert with them.—That you have considered the subject with all possible impartiality, and the result has been, that though you think not only *frequent* and *unnecessary*, but *great* and *many* alterations, even where they may seem to be more needful, no way expedient in our present circumstances; yet you are of opinion, that *some* may be *prudently* and *safely* attempted.—That you had drawn up, pointed out and recommended some few alterations and amendments, such as you judged were most necessary, and might be ventured upon without hazard. And that you conceived such amendments might properly be made, when those in authority shall think fit to enter upon such matters".—But that " upon second thoughts, and by the advice of those whose judgment you greatly reverence, and from whom you could not easily differ, you almost *entirely* omitted them.—That in your opinion, the principal, if if not the only things we should at least for the present, or perhaps at any one time attend to, are such *abuses and disorders*, as have insensibly *crept into our public worship, and do greatly dishonour it*; — or such, (if any there be) as are not fairly defensible; or though capable of a fair, just and rational defence, may be nevertheless *plausibly excepted to*, or serve for pretences to stir up divisions in the church, or to form separations from it. That alterations in things of this nature, are surely the *most necessary, and should be first thought of*. This is some sketch of the sentiments and ideas,

ideas," which you would have the reader conceive of you.

In general, this ſeems to be not a little in favour of having corrected " the abuſes and diſorders, that have inſenſibly crept into our public worſhip, and do greatly diſhonour it." But I moſt heartily wiſh, you had obliged the public with " thoſe particulars, which you had drawn up in a way different from the authors of the diſquiſitions, and intended to have propoſed," tho' diverted therefrom, becauſe it might have been of great ſervice in the preſent caſe.

In your book you thus write; " The amendment of ſuch parts of our conſtitution and public ſervice, as in the *judgment of ſober and unprejudiced perſons*, there lies *no juſt or even plauſible exceptions* to, is certainly a *reaſonable and deſirable thing*, p. 5. I agree that the preſent age is in a better diſpoſition than the laſt, to receive propoſals of ſome alterations of the liturgy, p. 7. The rendering our *liturgy and conſtitution quite unexceptionable, and placing them above the reach, either of ſcruple or cavil*, is certainly prior in the order of things, and more neceſſary than the improvement and perfecting of them; and the doing of that, I apprehend, will require as many alterations, as wiſe men will think proper at *this*, or indeed at any one time, to be attended to." p. 9.

This is a moſt valuable paragraph, and ſhews, that truth is of great force, very powerful and will prevail, even when much art is ſometimes uſed to ſtifle it; and if you can by your power and influence, (for you ſeem to write under authority) procure this to be effected, all diſputes will then ſoon be at an end, not only with you, and the authors of the *candid diſquiſitions*, but with the

the diſſenters alſo. For if once *our liturgy and conſtitution* can be rendered *quite unexceptionable*, ſo as to *place them above the reach either of ſcruple or cavil*, (by which you plainly admit that they are not ſo now) the preſent controverſy will ſoon be determined; and what will be moſt extraordinary, in favour of all the contending parties. For as you truly obſerve, " when things are well, and no reaſonable objection can be made, *all* ought to be ſatisfied. p. 7." Indeed, this would be true wiſdom, agreeable to ſcripture, reaſon, and chriſtian charity. I might almoſt ſtop here, but am willing to give the reader more of your ſentiments, in favour of what is before propoſed by me.

After your obſervations on the ſinging pſalms, which all muſt admit to be very juſt, as alſo the method you thereby propoſe for reducing the price of common-prayer books, by retaining only ſome ſelect ſinging pſalms, and this might be yet farther done, by omitting ſome of the ſcripture ſentences, the *benedicite*, and other hymns, that are ſeldom uſed; you then very judiciouſly remark, " that certain occaſional offices are really wanted, an office for conſecrating of churches, for priſoners for debt, for receiving proſelytes, for the excluſion of unworthy members from the church, and re-admiſſion into it, upon their giving evidence of their repentance; and if an order of family-prayer, or one ſingle prayer for the uſe of families, was drawn up in convocation, and by authority inſerted in our liturgy, it would in all probability, lead many families to the practice of this duty, who now neglect and never think of it; ſome of theſe offices, if not all, were actually prepared by the convocation many years ago; and I hope we ſhall ſee the day, when they ſhall

be added by proper authority to our liturgy, p. 39."—As you here expreſs yourſelf in the *plural* number, it encourages me to think, that your hopes are well grounded, which will afford pleaſure to numbers of good chriſtians. The ſame hint you give, p. 36. where mentioning ſome alterations in the ſinging pſalms, you add, "we will not deſpair of ſeeing this done, before it is long, firſt in a *ſynodical*, and then in a parliamentary way." Again, ſay you, "my own ſentiments upon this head, (the too great length of our ſervice) are pretty concordant with yours, the *candid diſquiſitors*, though perhaps in a few things they may ſomewhat differ, p. 41."—What you obſerve, as "to omitting the morning prayer on *Wedneſdays* and *Fridays*, and to uſe the litany enlarged with new collects or prayers towards the cloſe of it," is very juſt for the reaſon you give; and I highly approve of your inſiſting on the uſe of the litany, on *Sundays*; it being do doubt, "in the main, an excellent ſervice and very affecting;" but give me leave to add, it might with a little alteration, be made more generally "eſteemed by our people, p. 43."—"The removing from our liturgy, all *juſt and plauſible objections*, ſo that no one ſhall be likely to make any difficulty of *aſſenting* and *conſenting* to the uſe of it (eſpecially if the *mending of our conſtitution and diſcipline be alſo taken in)* will be I conceive work enough to be thought of at one time. Let us apply ourſelves then to that in the firſt place; let us firſt attempt ſuch alterations as are abſolutely and moſt neceſſary, and theſe being made, the other perhaps will be the more eaſily effected. If the moſt needful alterations ſhall be received with general approbation, as we may hope they will, eſpecially, if

they ſhould happily be followed with ſuch a *union of all reaſonable diſſenters with our church*, as we may *juſtly expect*; we may then proceed more boldly, and if I may ſo ſpeak, go on at leaſt *ſomething nearer to perfection*, p. 44." you then obſerve, " that there are but few amongſt us, who are for no alterations." A happy omen this, and which ought to be conſidered as a great encouragement to proceed in the deſign.

By altering of *exceptionable* paſſages in the liturgy, you would be underſtood to mean, " not only thoſe which honeſt and conſcientious chriſtians may be ſuppoſed to make ſome ſcruple of uſing, but all *obſolete words*, that by length of time have changed their original ſignification, and had different ideas annexed to them, and *whatever blemiſhes beſides there may be therein*, of the like kind, p. 45." This is a fair conceſſion, and what has been frequently urged in favour of alterations. Again, " I am very ſenſible *there are ſome things as well in our diſcipline and conſtitution, as in our liturgy and worſhip that want correction and amendment*; particularly, the proceedings in *excommunication*, *commutations of penance*, and the diſpoſitions of them. I am the more free to mention theſe things, becauſe *we* have already in relation to them, ſome excellent conſtitutions drawn up in convocation, which have lain forty years ready to be paſſed into eccleſiaſtical laws, when thoſe in authority ſhall think proper; and if the book of canons ſhould be reviſed by wiſe men, and made more ſuitable in ſome things, to the preſent ſtate of the church, I will give you my word, it would be no trouble to me. p. 47." How little then would the convocation have to do, when ſo many things are prepared ready to

their

their hands, as you here, and I before have obſerved ? You add,

" I have had it ſuggeſted by wiſe men, that the act of uniformity, and by conſequence the preſent liturgy, being made an eſſential and fundamental article of the union, it may be doubted, whether the propoſed alterations of it, are not now become impracticable. But *I hope not*; we cannot perſuade *ourſelves* it was the meaning of the legiſlature to make the one or the other, *abſolutely unalterable*; but if they remain the ſame in all their *eſſential* and *ſubſtantial* parts, it is doubtleſs as much as was intended. *We* may be ſure the legiſlature never intended to exclude all additions that ſhould be thought expedient to be made to them. If they did, how ſhall *we* juſtify thoſe additional offices and prayers, which have been ſince on ſpecial occaſions, from time to time, introduced into the church ſervice? And if all *additions were not*, why ſhould we ſuppoſe all *alterations were meant to be made illegal and unwarrantable?* It is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe they would tye up their own, and the hands of their poſterities and ſucceſſors for ever, from making alterations, as times and circumſtances ſhould require. A bill was lately paſſed, intitled, *an act to explain the two acts of uniformity*, &c. in favour of one gentleman whoſe caſe was extraordinary, and ſeemed to require ſome indulgence, p. 51, 52." and permit me to ſay, does not the caſe of many others of our church, the diſquiſitors in particular, beſides the more conſcientious diſſenters, alſo demand ſome pity, *ſome indulgence?*

Indeed, you once more give great hopes of ſome alterations in the following words, " I have been credibly informed, his majeſty for-

merly ſaid to a late prelate, *Is there any thing, my lord, you would have me do for the church of* England? if there be, let me know it; and he who of his own motion will ſay this, cannot receive otherwiſe than graciouſly, any petition for leave and opportunity to his clergy, to conſult together for its good, if it be made with decency and propriety, p. 56." I no way queſtion, but his majeſty will be as ready now to ſay the ſame, to any one or all of our preſent biſhops, would they pleaſe to make a proper application; notwithſtanding "any contrary impreſſions, which corrupt politicians who are concerned only for the ſtate, and care not what becomes of religion and the church, may attempt to be made upon him, p. 56." And for the reaſon which you aſſign, "becauſe his majeſty is of himſelf too wiſe to let either his judgment be miſled, or his affections poiſoned, and his upright intentions towards the eſtabliſhed church perverted by their falſe politics, or their groundleſs and unreaſonable ſuggeſtions, p. 56."

Thus have I fairly connected, and in one view as it were repreſented your ſentiments, with reſpect to alterations in our liturgy and eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, which are manifeſtly much in favour of it; and if you are in earneſt, and have that influence with ſome in power, as you ſeem to intimate, and as report goes; I hope you will in a proper manner, exert your intereſt on the occaſion; and then I believe you will not find many to oppoſe you, not even the few which you ſay are againſt alterations. But ſhould what you have thus offered meet with a general concurrence and approbation, yet I think there are ſome things obſerved by you, which may deſerve a little conſideration. This brings me to take

take notice, as briefly as I can, of ſome particulars.

The frequent repetition of the lord's prayer, you ſeem by your ſilence to give up, as no doubt, thinking it indefenſible. But then if I take you right, you oppoſe all alterations in the offices of *confirmation*, *infant baptiſm*, and *burial*; nor are you for leaving the ſign of the croſs or kneeling at the ſacrament indifferent. As to thoſe offices, I and many others think the alterations propoſed in 1668 and 1689, are ſo juſt and reaſonable, as not to admit of the leaſt diſpute; and this done, thoſe difficulties and inconveniencies which you inſinuate, will at once be removed. With regard to the intire diſuſe of the *Athanaſian* creed, enough is ſaid for that in the foregoing ſheets; and as to the leaving the ſign of the croſs and kneeling at the ſacrament indifferent, what biſhops *Stillingfleet* and *Burnet* have ſaid on the occaſion, muſt be ſufficient to ſatisfy any reaſonable *impartial* perſon; and ſince both theſe ceremonies, do only concern, either parents of children with regard to the one; and the communicant as to the other; the leaving theſe as indifferent in their uſe, as they are in their own nature, can bring no reproach whatever on the miniſter who officiates, which ſeems to be your chief objection againſt ſuch alterations. And yet ſpeaking of the ſign of the croſs, you ſay, "when it ſhall be deſired by diſſenters, as a condition of their coming in and embracing the communion of the church, we ſhall *undoubtedly give it up* to them; nay, I am ſatisfied, we ſhall not ſtand with them for half a dozen things of the like nature, upon ſo good and valuable a conſideration." I muſt confeſs that it ſeems moſt prudent, was there not one diſſenter, to give up all ſuch indifferent

different ceremonies, if it be only to ſecure both our church and clergy from cenſure.

The office of confirmation is no doubt, " an excellent inſtitution, a primitive ordinance, and an uſeful one." But however " ſolemn and affecting the preſent form may be" in ſome parts; there are many other expreſſions in it, that certainly require alterations, as you will ſee obſerved in the foregoing tract; you have only produced ſuch ſentences as no one diſlikes, omitting thoſe which are juſtly liable to objection. Indeed, your remark concerning, " the croud and tumult which in moſt places too much diſturb and interrupt the adminiſtration of that ſervice," is very pertinent; and I apprehend the method you propoſe to prevent, it will anſwer the end, when put in execution.

If it be true, that " the clergy were never yet ſo likely, nor ever will be more likely, to act with perfect unanimity, and in a manner every way becoming them, than now;" becauſe, that " moderation, true and genuine, is growing apace to be their predominant character. That the flame of party rage are dying away amongſt them.—And that after ſo long an intermiſſion of convocations, they will be no doubt doubly careful of their conduct, that ſo they may merit the favour and countenance of his majeſty, convince him and the whole world, that no danger or inconvenience is likely to enſue, from their aſſembling and acting parliamentary; eſpecially, as all imprudent heats and debates may be prevented, and by his majeſty's pointing out, as has uſually been done, the ſeveral particulars they are to go upon in their conſultations, p. 54, 55." I ſay, if all theſe ſuggeſtions be fact, then your obſervation, " that nothing ſhould be done without

without a convocation," may require consideration; and in such case I would hope, that if suffered to sit, their proceedings will be so consonant to truth, reason, and christian moderation, as to remove those aspersions, that may have been cast on them! Indeed, if your surmises do not prove true, his majesty can but part with them, when they begin to act otherwise.

I have not time to consider many other points you have insisted upon, which doubtless, some one or other may reply to; there being I apprehend sufficient cause for it. Indeed your observation on the method of singing psalms and anthems in some parishes, by which the whole congregation is as much edified thereby, as had they been sung in *Buchanan*'s latin, p. 33, 34." is a most certain fact; and I think the same is also true of our cathedral service, and that what you urge, is an unanswerable argument against chanting and singing in our cathedrals, and which certainly demands a speedy regulation. Please likewise to consider, whether what you truly observe in p. 36, 37. concerning the use of *Sternhold* and *Hopkins*'s singing psalms, is not in the reason of the thing, very similar, and equally applicable to, *a new translation of the bible, of the reading psalms, or any other alterations*, that may prudently be made by proper authority. Your words are, "some I expect will object to this, that the common people are much addicted to this translation, and would be extremely loth to part with it; formerly I believe it was so; but now the case is altered, and the people are grown pretty indifferent to one translation or the other, and truly they may well be indifferent to all, who conceive they have nothing to do with any." Here you well display the force and ill

effects

effects of cuſtom. One thing more; "it would be ridiculous, ſay you, to ſingle out for *ſinging* three or four verſes, that are purely relative to the *Jews*, or to king *David*;" and ſuffer me to aſk you, is it not as ridiculous, or what elſe is it, to ſingle ſome verſes out of pſalms, for *hymns*, which no way relate to our times and circumſtances, ſuch as part of the *venite exultemus*, the *magnificat*, and the *nunc dimittis*, when others much more proper might be ſelected from the book of pſalms; nay the *benedictus*, the *cantate domine*, and *deus miſereatur*, though ſeldom uſed, with a little alteration would not be improper. I hope you will be ſo good, as to give theſe laſt quotations from your performance, a review, and a little more ſerious reflection than you ſeem to have done. But however inadvertently theſe expreſſions might drop from you, yet ſome of them when rightly and extenſively conſidered, may ſerve as juſt and true anſwer, to what you more or leſs inſiſt on in p. 7, and 8. and from p. 8. to 25. But which I have not time to make any other reply to, than in your own words, referred to as above, unleſs by aſking you this ſerious queſtion. Which is moſt rational, wiſe and prudent, either to have a liturgy ſettled and adapted, to the ſentiments of learned biſhops and divines of our *church*, or to have ſuch an one, as the *common people* ſhall think fit to approve of; "men who are weak, ignorant, injudicious, capricious, factious, head-ſtrong, ſelf-willed, and ſelf-ſufficient? p. 7." or ought we to be afraid of ſuch deſpicable perſons? Thus you ſee how the wheel goes round, and in what meaſure your own motto concerns your ſelf; "ſomething to blame, and ſomething to commend." And you know who hath ſaid, "with what judgment ye judge,

judge, ye ſhall be judged ; and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again*."

But I cannot take leave of you quite, without making a few remarks on your earneſt and intenſe application to the authors of the *candid diſquiſitions*, that they ſhould intereſt the diſſenters in the alterations propoſed. For God's ſake, what have we to do with them, in altering what is amiſs in our liturgy and conſtitution ? Cannot a man make alterations and improvements in his own houſe without calling his neighbours in to aſſiſt him ? Or in the preſent caſe, cannot we do what you ſeem to think is very neceſſary, "render our liturgy and conſtitution quite unexceptionable, and place them above the reach either of ſcruple or cavil; remove from it all juſt and plauſible objections, by attempting ſuch alterations as are abſolutely and moſt neceſſary, even all ſuch things, in our diſcipline, liturgy, or worſhip, as want correction and amendment; and by changing all obſolete words, and whatever blemiſhes beſides may be therein of the like kind;" and may not theſe things be done, which you yourſelf recommend, without the aid of the Diſſenters? And if theſe "alterations ſhould happily be followed with ſuch a union of all reaſonable diſſenters without our church, as we may juſtly expect, p. 44." ſo much the better; indeed you afterwards ſeem to clear up this point, you write,

"I do not mean that we ſhould ſtay till the diſſenters ſhall think fit to join iſſue with us, and put to their helping hand, before we do any thing. *We* know what it is they would have us do if they know it themſelves, (I own my ignorance of this expreſſion) if it be in itſelf fit and

* Luke vi. 2.

reaſonable, and all things conſidered, expedient to be done, in God's name let it be done without them. If they like it when done, and ſhall thereupon conform, well and good; it will be a happy event; but if not, and they are ſtill for upholding the diſſention, we ſhall gain by it this advantage, however, that they will be left without excuſe, and the inſincerity of their former pretence, *that they were neceſſitated to withdraw from us, and would have conformed if we only would have altered a few things, which we ourſelves own are indifferent and alterable*, will appear to the world; and ſuch a diſcovery will be a dead weight upon them, and ſink their credit in the nation; our governors we are ſatisfied would go a great way to meet them, and think a few ceremonies well loſt for ſo valuable an acquiſition to the church, as the ſober and reaſonable part of the diſſenters would be, and our people alſo, obſerving the good effects of our governors moderation and condeſcenſion, and ſeeing their diſſenting neighbours come in apace and *walk together with them to the houſe of God, as friends*, would be eaſy under more and greater alterations, than they would otherwiſe, I fear, know how to digeſt and reconcile themſelves to, p. 64, 65."

I conclude with my hearty and unfeigned wiſhes, that all our governors in church and ſtate, and all our diſſenters, would ſeriouſly regard what you have here propoſed to their conſideration; which if they will do, "we may almoſt venture to ſay, the buſineſs is well nigh done, p. 65. And then, "the artful inſinuations of papiſts and unbelievers, will not have any advantage over us, nor can they make a handle of our diverſities and variations, the one to expoſe the

the religion of proteſtants to contempt, the other to bring into ſuſpicion, our common chriſtianity, p. 7." remove the cauſe, and the effect will ceaſe. And whether you are a clergyman, or a layman, yet as you are a gentleman and a chriſtian, let me intreat you to exert your abilities, and all that power, intereſt and influence, which you may have, and by a ſerious and earneſt application, to *your friend in a high ſtation*, and alſo to thoſe whoſe judgment you greatly reverence, and *to other leading men*," endeavour to intereſt them in the alterations you propoſe. Thus I hope, with your aſſiſtance, I have proved moſt ſatisfactorily, in favour of the queſtion propoſed, namely, the expediency, if not neceſſity, of having alterations made in our liturgy and conſtitution. With aſking pardon for this trouble, and hoping I have no way given juſt cauſe of offence, I am,

SIR,

Oct. 30, 1751.

Your's moſt reſpectfully, &c.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Title page line 6, for *or* read *and*; l. 17. read *p.* 20; Dedication, p. 5, l. 28, read *and conſiſtency*.